الجامعة الأردنيــــة
كلية الدراسات العليا

التاريـــخ: / /

نموذج رقم (١٨)
اقرار والتزام بالمعايير الأخلاقية والأمانة العلمية وقوانين الجامعة الأردنية وأنظمتها وتعليماتها لطلبة الماجستير

أنا الطالب: كارن بيرل دانيلسون الرقم الجامعي: (٨٠٨١٤١٧)

تخصص: الدراسات الإسلامية باللغة الإنجليزية الكليـــــة: معهد دراسات الإسلام في العالم المعاصر

عنوان الرسالة: Evaluation of American Muslim Da'wa Effort: The Role and Obstacles of American Muslim Women in the Realm of Interfaith Dialogue

اعلن بأنني قد التزمت بقوانين الجامعة الأردنية وأنظمتها وتعليماتها وقراراتها السارية المفعول المتعلقة باعداد رسائل الماجستير عندما قمت شخصيا" باعداد رسالتي وذلك بما ينسجم مع الأمانة العلمية وكافة المعايير الأخلاقية المتعارف عليها في كتابة الرسائل العلمية. كما أنني أعلن بأن رسالتي هذه غير منقولة أو مستلة من رسائل أو كتب أو أبحاث أو أي منشورات علمية تم نشرها أو تخزينها في أي وسيلة اعلامية، وتأسيسا" على ما تقدم فانني أتحمل المسؤولية بأنواعها كافة فيما لو تبين غير ذلك بما فيه حق مجلس العمداء في الجامعة الأردنية بالغاء قرار منحي الدرجة العلمية التي حصلت عليها وسحب شهادة التخرج مني بعد صدورها دون أن يكون لي أي حق في التظلم أو الاعتراض أو الطعن بأي صورة كانت في القرار الصادر عن مجلس العمداء بهذا الصدد.

توقيع الطالب: Karen Danielson التاريخ: May / 19 / 2011

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EVALUATION OF AMERICAN MUSLIM *DA'WA* EFFORT: THE ROLE AND OBSTACLES OF AMERICAN MUSLIM WOMEN IN THE REALM OF INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

By

Karen Pearl Danielson

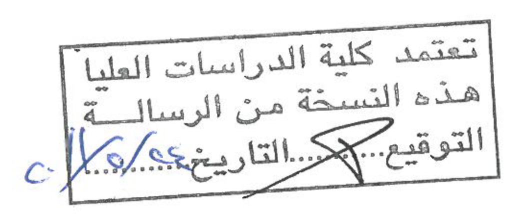
Supervisor

Dr. Mohammad Khazer Al-Majali, Prof.

This Thesis was Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master's Degree in Islamic Studies

The Faculty of Graduate Studies

The University of Jordan


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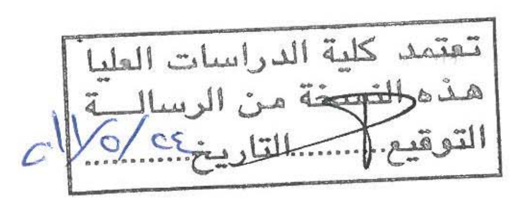
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COMMITTEE DECISION

This Thesis (Evaluation of American Muslim Da'wa Effort: The Role and Obstacles of American Muslim Women in the Realm of Interfaith Dialogue) was successfully Defended and Approved on: May 10, 2011.

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In the Name of Allah, The Entirely Merciful, The Especially Merciful

All Praise to Allah, Lord of the Universe

and

May Peace and Prayers Be Upon His Final Prophet and Messenger

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to the service of Islam, to my brothers and sisters in Islam, and to all those who are interested in interfaith dialogue with Muslims. It is my hope that this thesis contains a message that is pleasing to Allah and be of benefit to those who read it.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to show my gratitude to Allah, all praise be to Allah. It is through His guidance; spiritual, experiential and knowledge based that has made it possible for me to participate in this thesis program and as well, by providing me the extraordinary opportunities to arrive and live in Amman.

I would like to acknowledge and thank my husband, Tawfik Tawil, who has made some extraordinary sacrifices and my family: Ayub, Omar, Muath, Asma, Ibrahim, Ismail and my sister in law, Aziza. Their unquestioning support and patience given me during my studies and the writing of this thesis and their willingness to help me through has been what keeps my heart warm. I love them dearly. Your sacrifices, great in regard to your differing capacities, will not be forgotten. May Allah give them the best of rewards! And guide them to better than this achievement.

I would also like to acknowledge my mentor and teacher, Mahdi Bray, who, when he speaks; he speaks with faith, who, when he speaks; he speaks with conviction, who, when he speaks; he speaks with hope! May Allah recover him to the fullest and assure him of a great reward for all his hard work and dedication in the service of Islam.

I would also like to acknowledge my friends and colleagues (Batool, Souhad, Aisha, Yasmeen), many of whom have gone above and beyond what is expected from them. Chantal, who challenges me to strive for better. Um Sajeeda, who is convinced I have something to offer in my writing. Michelle and Donna, who no matter how far away I am or how long it has been remain true to our sisterhood and keep me close in the heart.

I would acknowledge the Institute of Islamic Studies at the University of Jordan and Dr. Dua'a Fino, Dr. Mohammad Rayyan, Dr. Amjed Qoursheh, Dr. Mahjoob Zweiri, Dr. Ibrahim Arquoub (my instructors); all whom gave me confidence and inspiration which without I could never have finished. Finally, a very special thanks and acknowledgement to Dr. Mohammad Majali, my instructor and advisor, who put trust in my efforts and held overwhelming confidence in me.

May Allah reward you all!

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS, TERMINOLOGY AND NAME EQUALIVANCY IN ENGLISH

Abu Dawud	One of the six major collectors of hadith in sunni Islam
Abu Hurayra	Companion of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)
Allah	God; The God free from gender and plurality
Ayah	Verse of Qur'an
Ayat	Verses of Qur'an
Dai'i	Islamic caller
Dar-ul-harb	Abode of war
Dar-ul-Islam	Abode of Islam
Dar-ul-kufr	Abode of infidelity or disbelief
Da'wa	Call to Islam
Eid	Festival; religious holiday
Fatwa	A formal Islamic legal opinion
Fiqh	Jurisprudence
Fir'awn	Pharaoh
Fitra	Natural/innate disposition
Hadith	Documented traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)
Hijab	Scarf; head covering
Iblis	Satan or the Devil

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Ibn Maja	One of the six major collectors of hadith in sunni Islam
Ibrahim	Prophet Abraham (pbuh)
Ijtihad	Reasoning; the process of
Imam	prayer leader; and leader of a mosque in Muslim communities
interreligious	interfaith (terms are interchangeable)
isA	*inshaAllah*; God-Willing
Islam	Surrendering to the Will of Allah; name of the Faith of Muslims
Jihad	Struggle; also used to denote an aspect of fighting under Islamic conditions
Jilbab	Long coat or outer covering entire body
Khidr	A contemporary to Prophet Moses (pbuh); a sort of spiritual guide/teacher
Khutba	Sermon
Musa	Prophet Moses (pbuh)
Muslim	The follower of Islam
pbuh	peace be upon him
ra	*radhiyAllahu 'anhu*; May Allah be pleased with him/her
raa	*radhiyAllahu 'anhum/'anhuma*; May Allah be pleased with them/those two
Sahih Bukhari	One of the six major collectors of hadith in sunni Islam

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Sahih Muslim	One of the six major collectors of hadith in sunni Islam
saw	*sal Allahu 'alayhi wa sallam*; peace be upon him
Shari'a	Islamic law
Shi'ite	Term used to describe Muslims who are separate from sunni/mainstream; political/theological separation
SubhannaAllah	Glory be to God
Sunni	Term used to describe mainstream/majority of Muslims
Surah	Chapter of Qur'an
Surah Al-Kahaf	Chapter named The Cave from the Qur'an
swt	*Subhanahu wata'ala*; Glory be to Allah
Tafsir	Exegesis
Takfir	Disbelief
Tawheed/tawhid	divine unity
Yusuf	Prophet Joseph (pbuh)
Zakah	purity; term used for a tax or fixed portion of income

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NOTES

1. All meanings of the verses of Qur'an in English are taken from Saheeh International, Arabic text with corresponding English meaning. (Saheeh) Reference to each chapter/*surah* number and verse/*ayah* number are within parentheses e.g. *(*c*s:*v*a)* and the verse, itself, will be held within quotations, unless distinguished by deep indentation, as well as drawn attention to by italics.
2. An unusual number of references are from the websites of various organizations. This number is unusually high because they are the direct object of study, for example, MLFA (The Muslim Legal Fund of America Fighting for Legal Justice Since 2001) or ISNA (Islamic Society of North America). Alternative sources would not be direct references, therefore it has been found to be necessary to study the institutional activity of American Muslim organizations from their own websites.

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By

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Supervisor

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ABSTRACT

This research provides an epigrammatic assessment of the rigorous continuation of the application of Islamophobic rhetoric in American polity and society which compels the American Muslims to justifiably react. Additionally, this thesis examines the cohesive capacity socially and institutionally of the American Muslim community that may or may not permit and provide adequate rebuttal to Islamophobia and it's stereotyping of American Muslims. This examination is historical and developmental. Specifically, this research examines the concepts of *da'wa* in the American Muslim psyche and the establishment of interfaith dialogue, recommending that American Muslim women take steps to strengthen and further their role by taking on a more leading and authoritative position, in order to aid in the deepening of the American Muslim population into the religious fabric of America. Moreover, this thesis postulates that the positive and rectifying impact of a female authoritative voice to remedy the situation or attitude that Islam is violent and/or it oppresses women.

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Introduction

As a more supported shift of *da'wa* effort conveying the message of Islam and initiatives to integrate by the American Muslim community, in general, began to take foot during the '90's and their deepened efforts post 9/11, the question is asked: Has the American Muslim population been successful in turning around the image of Islam and Muslims toward a more positive and correct perspective among the general American population? Have they combated the negative and derogatory stereotypes perpetuated by Islamophobia? More specifically, has their concerted effort yielded substantial opinion change or maintain a poor status quo? While these efforts have increased dramatically, it is not apparent that Islamophobic expression has decreased; quite possibly the opposite has occurred.[1] Therefore, the purpose of this research is to highlight and examine the American *da'wa* effort particularly the role and obstacles facing the American Muslim Woman as she participates or takes little or no notice of Interfaith Dialogue and what are the recommendations to amend.

This thesis is working from the understanding of a subsidiary argument that currently the relationship of Islam and Muslims in the West is increasingly detached from Islam and Muslims in the East. Islam and Muslims in America are not like Islam and Muslims in the East. Islam in the West is conditioning itself into a global milieu; it[2] is one element of many. Everything in the Islamic world is related, either reinforced cultural practices or in response to Islam in some manner; its tradition, its history, its politic, its style and manner of function. Everything in the Western world is not; it's a whole other context. Therefore, Islam and Muslims toil in a manner that is less and less like Islam and Muslims in the Islamic World. Early Muslim immigrants to America, when they finally got around to settling in, were defining *da'wa* as proselytizing and propagating Islam. However, *da'wa* has to take on a

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[1] Fakhouri, Hani. "**Islamophobia on the Rise**." 5 April 2011. Middle East Today. 14 May 2011 <http://mid-east-today.blogspot.com/2011/04/islamophobia-on-rise.html>.
[2] "It" meaning Islam and Muslims as one body.

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whole new form because it can no longer function in that manner. Is this changing Islam? No, this researcher believes that Islam itself is defined by the relevance that is best suited for the environment and that Islam is not about conforming a people into a one dimensional, monolithic body but to uplift people to its best condition as possible considering the environment.[1] This very well may be the cusp of identifying what is Islam and who are Muslims in the West as they continue to structure their presence. This is crucial and primary and it is the point where this thesis speaks with a fresh attitude; postulating that Islam and Muslims in the West *are* the West; not the East, but part and parcel to America. If they are not yet ingrained in the fabric of the West, the West is ingrained in them.

> Muslim men and women are now clearly visible with their distinctive dress, raising public awareness and interest in their religion, history and culture. They highlight the positive aspects of Islam that can be passed on to this country, especially in family life, and they practice what I refer to as "the silent *da'wah*."[2]

"With large Muslim populations, Muslims have become part of the fabric…and have become part and parcel."[3]

The dilemma that some Muslims have regarding the attachment they feel to the East must be reconciled and for some that has been to see the West as "the other"; a non-component of Islam but this is the very essence of the "us vs. them" mentality that does not see Islam as serving humanity but only as self-serving to Muslims. This researcher feels that is a reckless ignominy. This thesis will lay out basic demographics of Muslims in America, allude to the depth of immersion of Islam and Muslims in America but time and space will

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[1] Siraj Islam Mufti, Ph.D. "**Conmittment with Understanding**." 2 May 2003. Islamicity.com. 16 May 2011 <http://www.islamicity.com/articles/articles.asp?ref=IC0305-1957&p=2>.
[2] Al-Alwani, Taha Jabir. **Towards a Fiqh for Minorities**. Occassional Paper. London: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2003. Page xvii.
[3] Ibid., page xviii.

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not be used for substantiating this argument any further; that has been done, a plethora of writers and researchers have covered this subject abundantly and would only function as redundancy on the subject of Muslims in the West.[1]/[2]

Chapter one, *Current State of Affairs: American Muslims*, lays out the conditions of the American Muslim Community in all its vast and diverse elements, historically and contemporarily in order to comprehend just from where American Muslims come, what they face and where they yet need to go.

Chapter two, *Women*, simply titled, is a presentation of certain necessary issues that peg her as the most symbolic form of stereotyping present. What is her role in society and what are the possibilities and does she have the power, in her own hands, to turn the tides?

Chapter three, *Da'wa and Dialogue*, is an in depth study of the relationship between the two and interfaith dialogue in particular; Islamically, historically and developmentally. It also looks into the pros and cons of interfaith dialogue, its obstacles and what reason do the American Muslims have to participate as well as opening the sensitive subject of intra-faith dialogue. Furthermore, what is a pluralistic society and what role does interfaith dialogue play in it. This chapter examines the American Muslim woman's role as well in interfaith dialogue and what are the possibilities, if any, for the future.

Chapter four, *The Main Obstacles of Women in Interfaith Dialogue*, this is a very specific survey presented to interfaith participants of various faiths seeking their view regarding the Muslim woman and the obstacles that may prevent her from being a better partner in interfaith dialogue. Close attention is paid to the various themes that emerge as to

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[1] Haddad, Yvonne Yasbeck. **Musim Women in America The Challenge of Islamic Identity Today**. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006, pages 5-7.
[2] Sample list of authors who have substantiated Islam and Muslims in the west as permanent elements (Khan 1) (Smith 75), (Nyang 29-30), (Ramadan xi-xii), (Altalib 3-5), (Parvez 232-233), (Lang 8-9), (Nadwi 20) to name a few.

what are the problems to which the American Muslims must address in order to move forward.

Finally, the concluding remarks, aside from being partially anecdotal, [1] include a recap of the thesis and recommendations for an attempt to better the conditions of American Muslims in their pursuit for affirmation.

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[1] based on personal experiences, not official information. based on someone's personal experience or information rather than on facts that can be checked.

Importance

The decade preceding 9/11 and now a full decade after have been marked by an increased effort from the American Muslim community to better convey and increase the understanding of Islam and Muslims and various efforts have been initiated to amplify and expand the integration of American Muslims within the American society as well; civically, socially, economically, religiously as well being politically aware etc. Both directions are needed and mark a significant change in a refined definition and understanding of Islamic *da'wa*. The reason for this can be due to the persistent rise in Islamophobic rhetoric, Islamophobic policy and the general media misrepresentation of Islam and Muslims in America but also due to the need that American Muslims have striving for affirmation in America. Both directions face numerous obstacles on various levels affecting their success, whether combating this disproportionate and nonsensical painting of the Muslim community or for Muslims to become vital and valid not only in the religious landscape of America but in all levels of its society. Nevertheless, the urgency and importance to rise up to these challenges cannot be emphasized enough; it is no longer a time of "do what you can" but a time to "do what must be done". A brief survey of the social condition currently in the United States; the recent Qur'an burning campaign, the repeated inflammation every 9/11 anniversary, the controversy of the building of the "Ground Zero Mosque", and the most recent injustice is the Hearing for the Radicalization of Islam and Muslims by the Chairman of the House Committee on Homeland Security by a Congressman from New York, Republican Peter King, all call for such urgent action.[1]

Although Muslims have been in the Americas for centuries and some indications have shown there was a Muslim presence in pre-Columbus times[2]/[1] and documentation of Muslims

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[1] See section 1.2 and Appendices B, N and Z.
[2] Fell, Dr. Barry. **Saga America**. New York: Times Books, 1980.

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in the Antebellum as early as 1732.[2] Nonetheless, following this less marked period, more recently Muslims have nearly a century of solid history until today and consistent growth in the United States but yet we question if American Muslims are valid elements of American culture and society. At this point an important question to ask is, what can American Muslims do better to repel the negative stereotypes and relieve the strain caused by these imbalanced perceptions? My father once taught me, that *"if you can properly identify your problem then you are more than half way to solving it."* This researcher believes one way to properly identifying the problems inhibiting the American Muslim community from emerging from this crisis is by instituting more sophisticated methods of evaluation and, of course, acting or engaging appropriately. One significant way would be for American Muslims to modify their listening skills; attune to the feedback in order to better assist our understanding of where our own faults lie in this dilemma. According to Hussin Mutalib, in his paper *Beyond Pride and Prejudice: Western Perceptions of Islam and Muslims,*[3] one of the sources of the problem is the mutual ignorance of both Muslims and non-Muslims of each other's worldview, including their doctrinal-ideological differences on the role of religion and state in society. This researcher is not skilled as to define and detail these exact differences nor is this thesis about doing such. However, this researcher wishes to present an image and a "sound-byte" worth giving heed, by way of analyzing what many a author is saying and that of some very particular voices i.e. from the survey in Chapter Four, in order for American Muslims to reshape their own preconceived notions as to what is or is not *OR* who is or who is not contributing to the problem in order to realize what may be more in the reach of their

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[1] Dr. Barry Fell (Harvard University) introduced in his book Saga America - 1980 solid scientific evidence supporting the arrival, centuries before Columbus, of Muslims from North and West Africa. (Fell)

[2] Nyang, Sulayman S. **Islam in the United States of America**. Chicago: ABC International Group, Inc., 1999, pages 13-14.

[3] John L. Esposito, and Zafar Ishaq Ansari. **Muslims and the West: Encounter and Dialogue**. Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 2001, page 89.

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own hands to put a right then that which they previously considered or have taken responsibility for.[1]

[1] Chapter Four: The Survey- The Main Obstacles of Women in Interfaith Dialogue.

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Objectives

This researcher's focus is in the field of Interfaith Dialogue; where one can face a rather more sincere partner in the effort to reduce tensions, promote mutual understanding, and may be more willing to challenge the everyday stereotypes bombarding the American consciousness even while considering the apprehensiveness that still exists today and is reinforced daily throughout the U.S. media and be more willing to cooperate forming coalitions for the betterment and well-being of community. Interfaith dialogue and activities have come a long way from the old *Van Guard* methods of debate and accusations as well as the role, definition and application of Islamic *da'wa* in America. Hence, a brief study of these two areas i.e. *da'wa* and dialogue, and their development is necessary in this thesis to inspire positive growth; support a new way; sort of an upgrade to "standard procedures", as well as waking the occasion to turn around the dilemma that perhaps *"women were regulated to a subordinate role [in society]"*[1] and that there has been a lack of promoting the involvement of women because of the influence of what is perceived as traditional Islamic thought.

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[1] Siddiqui, Haroon. **Being Muslim: A Groundwork Guide**. Toronto, Canada: Groundwood Books, 2006, page 118.

Research Methodology

The role and perceptions of the involvement of the American Muslim Woman in American society will be examined deeper, in order to identify not only where she can exert more effort and promote a better and more comprehensive understanding of Islam and Muslims but to also identify obstacles she not only faces from outside the Muslim community but what she faces from within as well. An open-ended e-mail questionnaire has been utilized for this thesis in order to assess critically the American Muslim woman's role specifically in interfaith dialogue efforts from various interfaith participants who have dedicated not less than 3 years in the field but who hold under their belt as much as 27 years experience in some cases. This type of qualitative research, therefore, leaves data analysis somewhat more complex because of its comparative and contrasting nature.

Presenting clear and objective findings has proven to be somewhat difficult but this researcher hopes that enough evidence and opinions have been collected that particular and somewhat crucial similarities can be ascertained to lead change. In addition, it is unlikely that these findings will be for all facets of our subject or field of study but the limited information gathered is crucial and should reveal where and how positive strengths can be developed and become influential in the American Muslim *da'wa* effort and is seen as valid, even vital, factors to build upon in the uphill climb of not only fighting Islamophobia but also paying credence to the Islamic performance of *da'wa* in the best way. Some of the subjects are presented in rudimentary manner that it may seem insufficient, but the researcher has to choose to expose detail only as needed to present argument.

Let the record show that this researcher has founded, participated and developed interfaith dialogues in local, regional and national forums beginning in the late 1980's until

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present all while working within Islamic institutions and Muslim organizations in America[1] and so this participant-observer position lends to this research in both method and methodology. Valuable insights have been gained and now come to be substantiated through the extensive "pieces of the puzzle" collected from various authors and activists spanning not only the multi-dimensional aspects of interfaith dialogue, but contemporary Islamic understanding of *da'wa*, women in Islam, and Islam among Muslim minorities as Islam expands around the world out to the West and back again.

In light of religious studies around the globe today, this research promotes "the level of religious discourse in the view of the contemporary context and exchanging academic experiences by building interdisciplinary relations" because "it aims to deal with issues related to Islam and Muslims."[2] Furthermore, "reinforcing a better understanding of the cultural pluralism, and treating the cultural and religious challenges which come in the context of globalization."[3]

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[1] See CV Karen Pearl Danielson Appendix K.
[2] "University of Jordan." **Institute for the Study of Islam in the Contemporary World**. University of Jordan, 2011.
[3] "Institute for the Study of Islam in the Contemporary World." **Master Program in Islamic Studies.** University of Jordan, 2011.

Literature Review

Sociological and Islamic research texts whether in print, online, video documented or on radio; abstract or academic final papers; in journals or books were all gathered for this thesis to help address the issues presented and are referenced in a bibliography at the end of this thesis using the MLA format. Some of the sources have controversial, progressive, and traditional aspects of Islam but all solidly documented. Some resources may have perspective from the non-Muslim viewpoint, which is critical to understanding how others see Muslims and Islam while others may be theoretically outdated but included in order to scrutinize the current condition and perception of Muslims in the West and observe why the status quo remains. This researcher has gained important and useful insight from the survey and reading of these sources however, not all have been directly cited in this thesis. The following are some examples of perhaps the most relevant array:

1. **Ansari, Zafar Ishaq.[1], and John L. Esposito.[2] *Muslims and the West: Encounter and Dialogue*. Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University, 2001. Print.**

A collection of twelve select papers from a seminar held in Islamabad under the joint auspices of the Islamic Research Institute at International Islamic University and the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, Georgetown University, Washington D.C. amidst the emerging premise of *The Clash of Civilizations* which included forty scholars, thinkers, and opinion-makers from different parts of the world in an attempt to understand the complex relationship of Muslims and the West. The book highlights Muslim from a historical

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[1] **Zafar Ishaq Ansari** is currently Director General, Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University, Islamabad. He has taught at the University of Karachi; Princeton University; King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah and King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. He was visiting professor and research scholar at University of Melbourne, McGill University and University of Chicago.
[2] **John L. Esposito** is University Professor of Religion and International Affairs and of Islamic Studies at Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. and the founder of the Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding. He is editor-in-chief of The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World and The Oxford History of Islam. He has numerous publications.

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perspective in the West, Islam and Muslims found in English Literature, a critical examination of the image of "the other", encounters with Modernity, Islamism, and Christian missionary views of Islam. But the most striking and relevant chapter to this research is entitled, *Beyond Pride and Prejudice: Western Perceptions of Islam and the Muslims*. This Chapter draws attention to the sources of the problems and defines each as contributing factors that "help explain this jaundiced, negative Western view of Islam and Muslims".[1] A table is included that examines Western Thought vs. Islamic Thought and sheds light on critical differences. If I may quote the editors of this text to sum up the sought after idealism of this book:

> *"…if Muslims and the West could learn the obvious lesson dictated by common sense and pragmatic prudence, let alone by higher idealism and altruistic concern for humanity's well-being, both these civilizations can join their minds and hands to build a much better world. Whenever they make up their minds to do so will prove to be a turning-point in human history."*[2]

2. **Bewley, Aisha Abdurrahman.**[3] ***Islam : the Empowering of Women*. London: Ta-Ha, 1999. Print.**

"Reading historical sources throughout the centuries of Islamic history, we find lots and lots of women active in all areas of life, and then suddenly it stops. What happened?"[4] Aisha Bewley's attempt to document this plethora of activity by Muslim Women in the Muslim world through biographical information does no less then substantiate the involvement of Muslim women in community and society from the very beginning, i.e. the lives of the *sahabiyat* and in the following centuries and their roles in scholarship, politics

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[1] John L. Esposito, and Zafar Ishaq Ansari, page 88.
[2] John L. Esposito, and Zafar Ishaq Ansari, page xvii.
[3] **Aisha Abdurrahman at-Tarjumana Bewley** is one of today's most prolific translators of classical Arabic works into English. She not only understands Arabic but also she is aware of the basic meanings and the nature of the teachings of history and Islam.
[4] Bewley, Aisha. **Islam: The Empowering of Women**. London: Ta-Ha Publishers, 1999, backcover.

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and spiritual aspects. Specifically, she strives to distinguish, what is commonly accepted by Muslims and others, the gender specific roles and substantiate "the role of the human being in Islam".[1]

3. **Esposito, John L., and Dalia Mogahed.[2]** ***Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think*****. New York, NY: Gallup, 2007. Print.**

The complexities and nuances of Muslims worldwide are translated in this work from statistics and other quantitative research as well as additional analytical approaches that come alive and speak for the seemingly silenced majority of Muslims. All sorts of concepts are explored from what makes a radical radical, and what Muslim women want. Deeper study of the "Clash of Civilizations" and what are the Islamic principles of Co-existence expound in this work. The most striking character of this book is its presentation of and analysis of The Gallup Polls and other researches and the mountains and mountains of data to uncover patterns beneath the apparent chaos. This researcher thinks there stems from this book substantial evidence that a "clash of civilizations" is not inevitable and Public Diplomacy can overcome the hurdles of Islamophobic rhetoric.

4. **Haddad, Yvonne Yazbeck, et. al.[3] Muslim Women in America: The Challenge of Islamic Identity Today. Oxford University Press, 2006. Print.**

The treatment and role of women are among the most discussed and controversial aspects of Islam. The rights of Muslim women have become part of the Western political agenda, often perpetuating a stereotype of universal oppression. Muslim women living in

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[1] Bewley, page 1.
[2] **Dalia Mogahed** is on the Advisory Council on Fatih-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships as appointed by President Obama in 2009 and currently advises the president about opinions, values, perceptions, attitudes, and desires of more than 1 billion Muslims worldwide. Previously she was a Senior Analyst at Gallup and Executive Director of the Gallup Center for Muslim Studies where she organized global research surveys. Additionally, she directed the Muslim-West Facts Initiative that partnered with Gallup and the Coexist Foundation.
[3] The authors are: **Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad** is Professor of the History of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations at Georgetown University, **Jane I. Smith** is Professor of Islamic Studies and Co-Director of the Duncan Black Macdonald Center for Christian-Muslim Relations at the Hartford Theological Seminary, and **Kathleen M. Moore** is Associate Professor of Law and Society at the University of California - Santa Barbara.

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America continue to be marginalized and misunderstood since the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Yet their contributions are changing the face of Islam as it is seen both within Muslim communities in the West and by non-Muslims. In their public and private lives, Muslim women are actively negotiating what it means to be a woman and a Muslim in an American context.[1]

Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, Jane I. Smith, and Kathleen M. Moore, authors, offer a much-needed survey of the situation of Muslim American women, focusing on how Muslim views about and experiences of gender are changing in the Western diaspora. Centering on Muslims in America, the book investigates Muslim attempts to form a new "American" Islam. Such specific issues as dress, marriage, childrearing, conversion, and workplace discrimination are addressed. The authors also look at the ways in which American Muslim women have tried to create new paradigms of Islamic womanhood and are reinterpreting the traditions apart from the males who control the mosque institutions. A final chapter asks whether 9/11 will prove to have been a watershed moment for Muslim women in America.

This groundbreaking work presents the diversity of Muslim American women and demonstrates the complexity of the issues. Impeccably researched and accessible, it broadens our understanding of Islam in the West and encourages further exploration into how Muslim women are shaping the future of American Islam.

> "This rich, well-researched and well-written book offers important new information on the lives of American Muslim women at home, work, and play. The authors, three prominent specialists on Islam in America, provide spectacular insights into both traditional and new ways in which Muslim women are participating in religious and political, academic and public life in

[1] Description from the publisher.

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America. A pioneering study that adds new dimensions to our knowledge about Islam and gender, and Islam in the West."[1]

"Muslim Women In America is a unique contribution to the growing body of literature on women in Islam, by three of the world's experts in the field. The authors challenge static views of the marginalized or oppressed Muslim woman, and demonstrate that Muslim women in America are diverse, dynamic, and changing the face of Islam."[2]

"A timely and insightful look into the lives of an American population that remains marginalized and misunderstood, four years after the terrorist attacks on 9/11. Beautifully written, accessible, and well-researched by three leading scholars on American Muslims today, this book challenges stereotypes of American Muslim women by showing that they are more similar than they are different to other groups of U.S. women. They are full and active participants in society trying to balance family, education, and work demands. Filled with historical and contemporary evidence that demystifies the experiences of Muslim American women, this book will help bring this group to the fore of mainstream scholarship."[3]

5. **Nyang, Sulayman S. *Islam in the United States of America*. [Chicago, Ill.]: ABC International Group, 1999. Print.**

Professor **Sulayman S. Nyang** teaches at Howard University in Washington. He is currently the Lead Developer for the African Voices Project of the Museum of Natural History of the Smithsonian Institution. His collection of essays have been compiled and written over several years and we can rely on his findings of the emerging Muslim population

[1] Barbara Freyer Stowasser, Professor of Arabic, Georgetown University, and author of Women in the Qur'an, Traditions, and Interpretation.
[2] Tamara Sonn, author of A Brief History of Islam.
[3] Jen'nan Ghazal Read, author of Culture, Class, and Work among Arab-American Women.

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in the United States. The purpose of this book is to provide the reader with the opportunity to explore the lives and times of the Muslims in the U.S. and that Americans will gradually learn to live with and accept American Muslims part and parcel to the fabric of American religiosity and socialization. A historical perspective is not the only method employed by the author but he examines the role of diversity and the American Dream as it pertains to the American Muslim. He discusses and documents American Muslim institutional building which he asserts is the road to integrating and validating the American Muslim presence. He discusses challenges, Islamic theology, trends, and "the other" in an attempt to reconcile the progression of the American Muslim community. An extremely well documented resource and insight to the discourse facing American Muslims.

6. **Parvez, Zahid.[1] *Building a New Society: an Islamic Approach to Social Change*. Leicestershire: Revival, 2000. Print.**

One could turn this book inside and out and still not finish its prospects for the positive influencing of changing society through what the author calls *Agents of Change*. Not only does the author develop and expound the Islamic objectives and vision but he harnesses the historical ramifications of doing nothing or worse blindly following traditional standards and directions. He is successful at defining a purpose and mission for the common Muslim, the active and the institutional. Thorough examinations of ideological challenges are addressed as well as are the social and moral challenges. He details the Islamic approach for Islamic Jurisprudence i.e. *Fiqh* and its relation to the global challenges. He addresses the religious and the lay; the inner approaches and the public. The whole of his writing is a practical framework for positive change in a Western context.

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[1] **Zahid Parvez** is a senior lecturer in Information Management at the University of Wolverhampton Business School, active in community activities and national President of the Young Muslims UK (1988-89) and the Islamic Society of Britain (1996-98).

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CHAPTER ONE

Current State of Affairs: American Muslims

1.1 Background

It can be said that the majority of Islamic movements are ignited out of a desire to return to the essence of Islam or to the return to a golden day of Islam but not singularly so for the American Muslim community and may not even be the priority; or primary principle in this day. American Muslims have been moved out of the need and desire for their affirmation in the U.S. No longer are they falling to the level of being tolerated or accepted but they are seeking affirmation: something that is affirmed; *a statement or proposition that is declared to be true.*[1] The collective American Muslim movement; the seeking for affirmation of the American Muslim community in the US will undoubtedly, characteristically differ from the collective movement of the *Ikhwan al-Muslimeen*, or Islamic Brotherhood,[2] for example, who are seeking affirmation as a minority political party in Egypt, or the *Salafiyyah* movement[3] in any Muslim state. These are Muslims ideological movements among a Muslim majority. These examples are simply stated, but the intrinsic variables and events that affect any movement, anywhere can change the course; add momentum, bring in new dimension, that even those at the head of a movement could never have envisioned, or speculated. To further the previous example, the various depths of participation of the Brotherhood in Egypt during the recent regime change.[4]

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[1] Dictionary.com Unabridged Based on the Random House Dictionary, @Random House, Inc. 2009. http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/affirmation ,retrieved 12/27/2009.
[2] The Brotherhood or MB) is the largest political opposition organization in many Arab states. The group is the world's 2nd oldest and 2nd largest group (after Tablighi jamaat),[1] and the "world's most influential Islamist movement". http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_brotherhood , retrieved May 14, 2011.
[3] A Salafi (Arabic: سلفي) is a follower of an Islamic movement that takes the *Aslāf* (plural of salaf) of the patristic period of early Islam as model examples. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salafi , retrieved May 14,2011.
[4] The Muslim Brotherhood joins protest already underway http://themostimportantnews.com/archives/egypt-is-on-fire-as-the-muslim-brotherhood-joins-the-egyptian-riots Retrieved 4/3/2011.

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From a strictly internal aspect; a spiritual or applicable process of Islam, American Muslims are moved in many directions, similar to the global movements of the Muslim world, and they are, as well influenced from many directions of the global Muslim movements. It is, however, the condition of their humanity; their minority status among non-Muslims in a non-Muslim state; their seeking of affirmation in the US that takes them in a different direction. Some questions are necessary to properly assess the representation of American Muslims. First, are American Muslims valid elements of American culture and society? How deep does the identity crisis run within the American Muslim population? And/or as well, Has the negative stereotypes of American Muslims and Muslims worldwide been lessened or held root due to the effort or lack thereof, from the American Muslim? This paper suggests that a closer examination of the image of American Muslims and Islam, historically, statistically and contemporarily, is one worth the task in order to move beyond the stereotypes, bigotry and discriminations that constitute a negative outlook of the West's idea of the freedom of expression, education, religion and economic independence.

The American-Muslim movement, and any Islamic movement, in theory; follows that Muslims strive to convince themselves of the unity and the universality of the *umma.* In practice, however, these qualities are not fully applied. Muslims demonstrate regionalistic and nationalistic attitudes and habits in their behavior. People of all walks of life cling to social and ethnic groupings and the definition of a movement, whether social, political or religious, is a type of group action; large groups focused on specific issues in order to carry out, resist, or undo a status quo.[1] In order for the Muslims of the world to achieve this prescribed unity in Islam, they need to have a meeting of the minds from all backgrounds, an

[1] **Social movement**. (n.d.). Retrieved December 26, 2009, from Wikipedia The Free Encyclopedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_movement

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international forum. While such meetings of the mind are not binding, they are crucial for information exchange, consultations, strategy formation and coordination.[1]

This researcher believes that today the American Muslim scene has the potential to be one of the best environments for this meeting of the minds to take place, because while not all Islamic movements are directly influenced by each other, they are responding to much of the same crisis of the Muslim mind i.e. a collective mind or thought prevalent in the minds of Muslim thinkers today. A tall order, indeed, yet this chapter will display the wide spectrum of distinction in order to evaluate the image of Islam and Muslims in America and its conclusion will humbly paint a picture more optimistic and in a better light than what many Islamophobes diligently work to destroy. Also, this researcher hopes that this chapter gives the reader the opportunity to explore the *life and times* of Muslims in America and come to the realization that Islam and Muslims are in America to stay and it behooves the American society to learn to live with and cooperate with Muslims living side by side; part and parcel; woven in the fabric of American community living and bound by innumerous ties of commonality.

It would be a mistake to make generalizations about American Muslims; their diversity is overwhelming; African American, immigrants from the entire Muslim world, converts; Anglo, Latinos/Latinas, Asian, etc. and from all walks of life; factory workers, professionals, doctors, lawyers, small business owners, students, homemakers, civic workers, etc; each with their own contribution to America's future. The presence of Muslims in America is deep with history. What have been the historical developments and contributions that have given rise to the institutionalization of the Islamic faith in America? It is the aim of this chapter to convincingly demonstrate the condition of American Muslims and what molded them to who they are today.

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[1] Altalib, Hisham. **Training Guide for Islamic Workers**. Vol. Human Development Series No.1. Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1992, page 28.

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1.1.1 African Americans and Their Roots

First let us go back to trace the historical roots of Muslims in America, going back to Pre-Columbian time. The controversy about this time rests in the fact that traditional historical record fails to properly document or to mention very interesting and stimulating pieces of data that deserve closer attention to prove Muslims were in fact already present in the New World.

> Dr. Barry Fell from Harvard University, introduced in his book *Saga America* – 1980 solid scientific evidence supporting the arrival, centuries before Columbus, of Muslims from North and West Africa. Dr. Fell discovered the existence of Muslim schools at Valley of Fire, Allan Springs, Logomarsino, Keyhole Canyon, Washoe and Hickison Summit Pass, Nevada; Mesa Verde,Colorado; Mimbres Valley, New Mexico; and Tipper Canoe, Indiana, dating back to 700-800 CE. Engraved on rocks in the old western US, he found texts, diagrams and charts representing the last surviving fragments of what was once a system of schools – at both an elementary and higher levels. The language of instruction was North African Arabic written with old Kufic Arabic script. The subjects of instruction included writing, reading, arithmetic, religion, history, geography, mathematics, astronomy and sea navigation.[1]/[2]

Renowned American historian and linguist, Leo Weiner of Harvard University, in his book, *Africa and the Discovery of America* in 1920 wrote that Columbus was well aware of the Mandinka presence in the New World and that the West African Muslims had spread

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[1] Mroueh, Youssef. **PRECOLUMBIAN MUSLIMS IN THE AMERICAS**. <http://www.jannah.org/articles/precolumbus.html>.
[2] Please refer to Appendix M for depictions.

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throughout the Caribbean, Central, South and North American territories, including Canada, where they were trading and intermarrying with the Iroquois and Algonquin Indians.[1]

"Antebellum"-is commonly used, in lieu of "pre-Civil War" 19th century. The period *after* the Civil War is called the "*Postbellum*," or Reconstruction era. Ibrahim Abd ar-Rahman came to the Americas at the age of twenty-six, enslaved and in chains. Forty years later he was returning a free man, along with his American born wife, Isabella, to Africa. His journey of return began in Cincinnati through New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and eventually by steamboat to Norfolk, Virginia. Hardly a town or city missed his passing as he travel with his head held high and dignified as a free and educated man. Abd ar-Rahman's life was detailed by historian Terry Alford's book, *Prince Among Slaves*.[2]

Thousands of Africans enslaved on plantations in the Americas, were ripped apart from their heritage and families, which led to the inevitable loss of their Islamic identity. By the eighteenth century there were many thousands of them, working as slaves on plantations. Today many Afro-American Muslims play an important role in the Islamic community.[3]

The African-American Muslims have not been spawned from a desire to form a partnership in a global agenda but has formed out of its own search for value and conduct. It is not fair to assume that Islam was accepted by African-Americans because they were driven in a manner reflective of the immigrant population who perceived themselves the conveyors of the message of Islam. The attempt of African-Americans to uplift their condition in the US has a long history and runs deep. The concept of Black Nationalism refers to the desire of Black Americans to control their own destiny through control of their own political organizations and through the formation and preservation of their own cultural, social and

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[1] Mroueh.
[2] Austin, Allan D. African **Muslims in Antebellum America: Transatlantic Stories ad Spiritual Stuggles**. New York: Routledge, 1997.
[3] "**African Slave Ship**." Son of the South. 05 01 2010 <http://www.sonofthesouth.net/slavery/african-slave-ship.htm>.

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economic institutions.[1] Many a voice has spoken of Black Nationalism and Black Separatist Movements for the later part of the 19th century and through the 20th century. Scholars have drawn distinctions from the "classical" version advocated by Booker T. Washington, end of 19th century, and "modern separatist ideology". Marcus Garvey advocated that all African-Americans leave America and return to Africa to "redeem" the African continent and people.[2] The **Nation of Islam**[3] has advocated the formation of black states even on American soil.

> Islam was seen as part of an original, African, identity whereas many converts saw Christianity as the religion of white supremacy and oppression, subjugating black Americans from the days of slavery to the present as second-class citizens denied full civil rights. As a result, quasi-Islamic or proto-Islamic groups that combined a selective use of Islamic symbols with Black Nationalism emerged.[4]

And so African-American Islam came to the scene in the early 20th century by way of an African-American search for a more authentic and cultural returning to the roots of their heritage. Black Muslims movement under Elijah Muhammad was only an "elitist ethnic movement", not recognized by the rest of the world.[5] Black Muslim movement "had been criticized for its heretical tendencies" and that Blacks commonly viewed Islam as something other than merely a personal faith to be adopted in pietistic fashion. It appeals to blacks by presenting Islam as an African religion and therefore the Black Man's religion, in contrast to Christianity, identified with the White man, oppressive, and the originator of the 'darkie

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[1] Thomas, Curlew O. Thomas and Barbara. "**The Impact of Black Nationalism on Negritude: A Comparative Study of Black Males and Females**." JSTOR 38.No. 1 (1977): 35-45.
[2] "Marcus Mosiah Garvey, Jr." **African-American Flag**. 05 01 2010, <http://african-americanflag.com/mmgarvey.html>.
[3] Nation of Islam, referred by NOI herein on out.
[4] John L. Esposito, and Zafar Ishaq Ansari. **Muslims and the West: Encounter and Dialogue**. Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 2001.
[5] Poston, Larry Allan. **Islamic Da'wah in North America and the Dynamics of Conversion to Islam in Western Societies**. Dissertation for Doctor of Philosophy. Northwestern University. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1988, introduction.

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slave' phenomenon.[1] The early founders of African-American Islam never envisioned the turn of ideology, theology toward mainstream sunni Islam, that one of their own, W.D. Muhammad, would come advocate.

1.1.2 Other American Muslims and Immigrants

It might be interesting to note here, due to the many number of Americans that feel that Muslims are an alien presence outside the limits of American life and history, that according to James H. Hudson, chief of the Manuscript Division at the Library of Congress and the author of many books, including *Religion and the Founding of the American Republic,* writes in a recent article that,

> The Founders of this nation [United States of America] explicitly included Islam in their vision of the future of the republic. Freedom of religion, as they conceived it, encompassed it. Adherents of the faith were, with some exceptions, regarded as men and women who would make law-abiding, productive citizens. Far from fearing Islam, the Founders would have incorporated it into the fabric of American life.[2]

A good example of an early 19th century was Muhammad Alexander Russel Webb "was born in 1846 at Hudson, Columbia county, New York. Educated at Hudson and New York he became an essayist and a short-story writer. He took to journalism and became the editor of *St. Joseph Gazette* and of *Missouri Republican*."[3] In 1887 he was appointed United States Consul at Manila, Philippines. It was during this assignment that he studied Islam and joined its fold. After becoming Muslim he extensively toured the world of Islam and devoted

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[1] Poston, chapter three.
[2] Hutson, James H. "**How did the US Founding Fathers view Islam?**" The Library of Congress - Information Bulletin - May 2002 4 April 2011.< http://www.islamicity.com/articles/Articles.asp?ref=IC1103-4605>.

[3] "**Alexander Russel Webb**." Wikipedia. 05 01 2010 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Russell_Webb>.

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the rest of his life to religious work. He also became the head of the Islamic Propaganda Mission in U.S.A. Mr. Webb died on 1st October 1916.[1]

It should be noted as well that five waves of Muslim immigration have been documented:

1) 1875-1910: individuals and families, mostly unskilled and uneducated Arabs fleeing from bad political and economic situations back home. These immigrants had to assimilate to survive.

2) 1918-1922: from E. Europe and Middle East, after WWI, assimilated as well.

3) 1930-1938: relatives and acquaintances of earlier immigrants.

4) 1945-1967: post WWII displaced people from India, Pakistan, and E. Europe. Mostly ruling elite, educated, westernized, rich, thus avoided assimilation.

5) 1967-today: wealthy individuals or families, highly educated professionals from Pakistan or Arab world. Not known to reside side by side.[2]

Migration of Muslims to America in the 19th Century; first mosque in Ross, North Dakota 1929 and then The Mother Mosque of America 1934; repurchased and refurbished in 1990 by T.B. Irving[3], Imam Taha Tawil and others. According to the most authentic accounts by the local community, and relying on their testimony Hajj Abbas Habhab and his brothers held the satisfaction of being the first Muslims to settle in the State of Iowa, an event that occurred between 1880 and 1888.[4]

> A major segment of the Muslim population in the United States is neither immigrant nor of immigrant parentage but is part of the indigenous population. The majority are African American, perhaps a third of the Muslim population,

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[1] "Alexander Russel Webb".
[2] Poston, chapter one.
[3] Thomas Ballantyne Irving (1914–2002), also known as Al-Hajj Ta'lim Ali Abu Nasr,[1] was an American Muslim author, professor, and scholar, who produced the first American English translation of the Qur'an.
[4] "Home." **The Mother Mosque of America**. 04 01 2010 <http://www.mothermosque.org/>.

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> with much smaller numbers of Latinos/Latinas, some of whom themselves are recently arrived or from immigrant families, Native Americans, and Caucasian citizens who have chosen to adopt Islam.[1]

Regarding the American Muslim population, the second half of the 20th century, one can generally state that an early active foreign student population sought to provide temporary support to itself; the '50's and '60's. Next, the late '60's and '70's, with the overwhelming majority found in major cities or other urban environments; spanning the continent; New York City, Detroit, Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, sought to serve the growing population of American Muslims, a more permanent resident community, with the founding and building of mosques and cultural centers which sought to maintain religious prayer schedules, weddings, deaths, births and weekend training of youth in Qur'anic recitation and Islamic Studies.

> As [the earliest immigrant] Muslims realized that the option to return home was no longer viable, they began to settle down on the east coast, in the Midwest, and as far as the Pacific coast. The early Muslims who settled in the United States often suffered from loneliness, poverty, lack of language skill and the absence of extended family and co-religionists.[2]

Currently, American Muslims are:

> …immigrants and native born Americans representing most of the races and cultural groupings of the world. They speak a wide variety of languages and represent a range of cultural, economic, educational, sectarian, and ideological positions.[3]

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[1] Haddad, page 7.
[2] Haddad, page 5.
[3] Haddad, page 4.

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1.1.3 Institutional Building

Then the '80's brought on a wave of establishing full time Islamic schools and other comprehensive organizations aimed at propagating the message of Islam and serving the growing needs of the Muslim communities. The '90's continued these efforts while a birth of organizations aimed at correcting the image of Islam and Muslims began while the interest and direction moved toward media, journalism, politics, civic and interfaith activities. Although this period also marked a time of internal struggles regarding leadership of the American Muslim population and its capacity; not only at the local levels but also regional and national levels as well, which became problematic for the cohesiveness of the American Muslim communities and affected the *da'wa* effort; conveying the message of Islam and initiatives to integrate.[1]

Post 9/11 brought about waves of political involvement and campaigns designed to educate Muslims of their citizen rights and leading the American Muslims to integrate more appropriately while promoting sensitivity/diversity trainings to the general American public, work sector and more concerted civic and interfaith activities. With varying degrees of intensity, the American Muslim population has attempted to work for nearly 3 decades at rectifying the misconceptions and stereotypes of Muslims.

> Americans of this century are different from their ancestors in three important respects. They are the beneficiaries of the industrial revolution in numerous ways their ancestors could hardly ever dreamt possible; they are the builders of a new country where multiple identities and cultural and racial diversities are unparalleled and unprecedented in human history; they are also the creators and creatures of a multi-religious universe where the right to believe differently is not only guaranteed to those wish to believe in anything but to

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[1] See Introduction explaining the supported shift of *da'wa* effort.

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> those who wish to believe in nothing. The American Muslim communities scattered around the US of A are the beneficiaries of this American experience.[1]

Recent trends in Islamic institution building have been on the rise and reaching competent status among its contemporaries. Such activity reaches into the realms of: Public education and outreach like Inter-religious dialogue and Intra-religious dialogue with National and Regional Conferences, Political Activism like Voter registration, political education and even Muslim civic leaders voted into office such as Keith Ellison, Minnesota State Senator, and even in the Sports and Entertainment arenas. Numerous national sports players like Kareem Abdul Jabbar, Hakeem Olajuwon, Muhammad Ali, Shaquille O'Neal, and famous entertainers of the likes of Jermaine Jackson who is Michael Jackson's older brother, Dave Chappelle, Lupe Fiasco, Busta Rhymes, Amir Sulayman, and Mos' Def. American Muslims, particularly from the African American communities have had the most influence in the Rap/Spoken Word and Jazz music genres.

Muslim American ethnicity Pew Forum indicates that Hispanics make up 4% of the American Muslim population, 37% white, 25% black, 20% Asian and 15% other.[2] Estimates of the American Muslim population are from approximately 2 million to 11 million. The most accurate report taken from a variety of sources indicates that Abdul Malik Mujahid from his "*Muslims in America: Profile 2001*"[3] may portray the most accurate estimate based on the findings of multiple public survey organizations which normally report about 2% Muslims in the U.S. Two percent of the total American population in the 2000 census gives "a little over

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[1] Nyang, page 11.
[2] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_in_the_United_States retrieved January, 2011.
[3] Mujahid, Malik. "**Muslims in America: Profile 2001**." SoundVision. 05 01 2010 <http://www.soundvision.com/info/yearinreview/2001/profile.asp Soundvision.com>.

5 million…"[1] The Pew Research Center's 2007 survey on American Muslims concludes that although Muslims in the U.S. are a diverse population – roughly two-thirds were born elsewhere – their attitudes, outlook and values are similar to those of the general American population.[2]

The developments in Islamic structures and institutions have run the gamut of need i.e. political, social, religious, educational, public educational, outreach, civic, human rights and civil rights, legal funding, charitable, and financial. The author believes that above mentioned images of the American Muslim experience can lead the reader to draw some positive conclusions but also to expect further emersion of the American Muslim community within the American religious fabric. Muslims are in America to stay and this author expects that they will not only survive the bigotry and discrimination, but soon flourish and lead the moral majority. This is due to the fact that Muslims have increasingly been more civically active and taking a bigger role in society. In regard to the identity crisis, Muslims in America are coming to terms that it is quite acceptable to be fully American and fully Muslim moving out of a time when some would intimidate them to feel like they have to choose. To express the American Muslim relevancy we use the words of Dr. Maher Hathout of the Islamic Center of Southern California, a prominent spokesperson for contemporary American Islam.

> The impact of Islam on the future of the America society will depend, to a great extent, on how relevant Islamic principles are to this society. Islamic ideas and ideals need to be articulated in a language that is understood by the masses, and carried out by institutions that can effectively deal with issues that

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[1] Tolerence, Ontario Consultants on Religious. **How many Muslims are in the U.S.** 5 1 2010. <http://www.religioustolerance.org/isl_numb.htm>.
[2] see Muslim American Demographic Facts Appendix T.

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> are relevant to the people. Our goal is to reach the minds and hearts of those who aspire for a better future.[1]

1.1.4 American Muslims and Theology

As already documented above, the movement of the African American Muslim community has a strong history and foundation either in the NOI or with Ministry of WD Muhammad, which after his death are blending as Sunni-mainsteam Muslims. The Ahmediyya movement, is separate from Sunni or Mainstream Islam, was founded by Ghulam Ahmed in India; he moved to Chicago at 80 yrs old and by 1959, the Ahmadiyya movement had 500 converts, 30% Asian immigrants, 5-10% were of Muslim extraction, only 5-10% white, and the remaining negroes. By, 1981 there were at least 26 chapters nationwide which were successful in their *da'wa* although they were considered offensive because of their evangelical approach.

> Only the Ahmadiyya movement borrows an evangelical approach of evangelism without apology for its Moorish Temple Foundation. The chief appeal of this movement lay in its presentation of Islam as non-discriminatory with regard to race, as a simple and rational religion and as a viable alternative to Negroes dissatisfied with their treatment at the hands of Christian churches.[2]

While it is relatively easier to identify populations of Muslims through ethnicity, it is more difficult to identify theological and ideological differences. Some mosques may definitely take on conservative, or *Salafi* tones and we know what mosque is NOI or Shiite, but this is not an accurate enough observation to determine population percentages. It's not unheard of to learn of a convert to Shi'ism or uncommon for an American to practice

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[1] Smith, Jane I. **Islam in America**. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999, page 177.
[2] Poston, chapter three.

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Sufi'ism. Very loosely we may say that the 0.7% Iranian population are Shiite but it is immeasurable from the other ethnicities who are also Shiite, at this time. Even the 30% population of African American is insufficient to determine the number who have remained NOI or those who have joined the Sunni mainstream. Conflicting claims abound from both sides. Additionally, there are further estimates that indicate the American Muslim population is as high as 11 million and as well as there are those that put the number of American Muslims at 2 million, which complicates matters. However, 8 million[1] is not a median number selected; it is reflective of good polling and survey practice.[2] We can, with relative confidence, say that the theological make up of American Muslims resembles the theological make up of all Muslims globally.

1.1.5 Key Elements and Demographics

Muslim American demographics reveal interesting key elements to describe the American Muslim population. Data was collected by Allied Media Corp., specializing in multicultural media communication, from a variety of polls conducted in the US.[3] Below is a brief listing of pertinent information regarding American Muslims.[4]

- MOSQUES

  Mosques 1,209
  Increase number of mosques since 1994 25%
- Top 5 states with the most mosques:

California	227
New York	140
New Jersey	86
Texas	67
Illinois and Florida	57

[1] See 1.15 Key Elements and Demigraphics.
[2] For more information please see http://www.allied-media.com/AM/AM-profile.htm retrieved April, 2011.
[3] Data collected from: 2001 Zogby International; a leading polling firm, 2002 Cornell University, 2000 US Census Data, 2001 Statistical Abstract of the US, Hartford Institute for Religious Research, and the US Dept of State.
[4] For a full list including tables please see Appendix T.

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- POPULATION 8 Million (US and Canada)[1]

South Asia	33%
African American	30%
Arab	25%
Sub-Saharan	3.4%
European	2.1%
White American	1.6%
Southeast Asian	1.3%
Caribbean	1.2%
Turkish	1.1%
Iranian	0.7%
Hispanic/Latino	0.6%

- American Muslims are younger
  67% of Adult American Muslims are under 40 years old
  67% of Adult Americans are over 40 years old

- American Muslims are well educated
  67% American Muslims have a Bachelor's degree or higher
  44% Americans have a Bachelor's degree or higher

- American Muslims are affluent
  US average annual income $42,158 (2000)
  66% American Muslims over $50,000
  26% American Muslims over $100,000

- SCHOOLS

There are now over 200 full-time Islamic schools and charter schools across the nation, of which most are kindergarten through sixth or eighth grade, and no more than a dozen are high schools. Recent estimates are that some three quarters of the teaching staff of these institutions are women.[2] Other Islamic high schools are growing up rapidly, including the Universal School in Bridgeview, Illinois, Al-Ghazali School in New Jersey, and the Universal Academy in Tampa, Florida. Chicagoland alone has as many as five Islamic high schools.[3]

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[1] 7 million in the U.S. and 1 million in Canada.
[2] Haddad, page 130.
[3] Haddad, page 131.

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Centers of higher learning are in their infancy in America and are gearing for specializations in the Arabic language as well as the Islamic Social Sciences and formal Islamic Sciences in *hadith, tafsir, fiqh*, etc. However, nothing more that certification is being offered for completing courses. These institutions do not have formal accreditations in the US but are working toward this. Three examples are Zaytuna College,[1] Islamic American University[2] and The Maghrib Institute.[3] Zaytuna's vision has always been to create a lasting institution of higher learning. To that end, we launched a pilot seminary program in 2004 that graduated five students in 2008. Based on our experience with the pilot program, we are moving forward with our plans to establish the first accredited Muslim college in the United States. At Islamic American University, IAU, you can earn your degree any way you want to; by correspondence, or online. IAU has grown from a project of the Muslim American Society, the nation's largest grass root organization for Islamic work. IAU is specializing in the Islamic education of working adults, Muslim American youth, and new Muslims by offering degree programs that are highly relevant and accessible. IAU has not been accredited by Council for Higher Education Accreditation, or CHEA, yet. The Maghrib Institute is a serious progressive program for Islamic studies AlMaghrib Institute offers a unique Bachelor's Program attained through single- and double-weekend seminars. AlMaghrib also offers students the opportunity to attain individual certificates several areas. AlMaghrib does not indicate any form of accreditation.

1.1.6 What's Next in the American Muslim Mindset?

In a dissertation done in 1988, Larry Allan Poston,[4] makes an attempt to describe the early stages of formal beginnings of the many American Muslim organizations and

[1] **Zaytuna College**. 01 04 2011 <http://www.zaytunacollege.org/ >.
[2] **Islamic American University**. 01 04 2011 <http://www.islamicau.org/static/ >.
[3] **Al maghrib Institute**. 01 04 2011 <http://almaghrib.org/about>.
[4] Poston.

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institutions. He calls such centers “para-mosque” structures because they are spiritual/religious organizations but they are not tied to any authority formed of a local congregation or body nor are they constructed for daily worship and prayer. Therefore these centers or “para-mosques” work independently. His initial examinations of these “para-mosques” are what form much of the bedrock for today’s American Muslim activism. The MSA[1] began in 1963 and now is represented in universities and colleges all over the United States and Canada and gave birth to ISNA[2] now considered the umbrella organization of mosques, Islamic schools and other organizations in North America, US and Canada. “ISNA promotes a pluralistic approach to the diversity of Islam. It is an original signatory to the “Amman Message, which recognizes the validity of Islam’s different theological and legal schools, including Sunnism, Shiism and Sufism.”[3] The MSA[4] has also spurred a number of other organizations that have in turn spurred more organizations, some directly and some break away organizations, for example: AMSE,[5] AMSS,[6] NAIT,[7] MAYA,[8] MYNA,[9] (Altalib 5) MAS,[10] and CAIR.[11]

Fresh on the scene are a handful of American Muslim thinkers who are ready to lay foundations to changing the status quo of the marginalized American Muslim communities. One such movement, not yet in the forefront, speaks to “Inspire -> Empower -> Affect Change: Leading the Change Movement – Toward a genuine and relevant civic engagement

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[1] MSA The Muslim Students Association.
[2] ISNA Islamic Society of North America.
[3] **Islamic Society of North America**. 01 04 2011 <http://www.isna.net/articles/press-releases/isna-statement-of-position-who-we-are-and-what-we-believe.aspx>.
[4]MSA. http://www.msanational.org/about .
[5] Association of Muslim Scientists and Engineers.
[6] Association of Muslim Social Scientists.
[7] North American Islamic Trust.
[8] Muslim Arab Youth Association.
[9] Muslim Youth of North America.
[10] Muslim American Society.
[11] Council for American Islamic Relations.

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for American Muslims that inspires hope, affects positive change and builds a movement for faithful citizenship."[1] The voice behind the movement is Sohail Ghannouchi,[2]

> Unfortunately, an assessment of our community's current situation and an analysis of its history reveals that while providing good programs and services, Muslim communities and organizations, taken individually or in totality, don't meet those requirements [of what a movement is suppose to be]. Moreover, not much is being done – at least so far – to turn the goodwill and good work of many Muslim activists and organizations into a genuine and relevant American Islamic movement that fulfils the divine mission and affects a substantial and sustained positive change in America.[3]

Furthermore,

> I believe that American Muslims should get out of their caves, tear down all the barriers of isolation, shed all excuses for disengagement, and jumpstart their outreach and civic engagement efforts. It is high time to make up for years of isolation, disengagement, reluctance, and irrelevance.[4]

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[1] Ghannouchi, Souheil. "**TOWARDS A GENUINE AND RELEVANT AMERICAN ISLAMIC MOVEMENT**." LeadChange. 15 01 2011 <http//www.leadingthechange.net/>.
[2] Dr. Souheil Ghannouchi was born in Tunisia in 1963 to a family with strong religious and political roots that produced some of the pioneers of the movement for independence and the Islamic movement.

After graduating with a masters in chemical engineering, Dr. Ghannouchi came to the U.S. in 1989, and got his Ph. D in chemical engineering from the University of Wisconsin – Madison, where he served as the president of MSA and the Islamic Center. He was also involved in founding and leading the campaign for human rights and political reform in Tunisia.

Starting mid-90s, Dr. Ghannouchi served for 12 years in the top leadership of the Muslim American Society (MAS) first as chairman of the Board, then president, and finally Executive Director. He also initiated, and for six years served, as the editor-in-chief of the American Muslim magazine.

During the last fifteen years, Dr. Ghannouchi traveled extensively and interacted heavily with communities across America in pursuit of his vision of transforming American Muslims into a genuine and relevant American Islamic movement that is rooted in society and inclusive to everyone who aspires to realize his/her potential and/or contribute to the greater good -- a better America. http//www.leadingthechange.net. January 15, 2011.
[3] Ghannouchi.
[4] Ghannouchi.

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The LeadChange movement has many participants and many have very insightful ideas to offer as American Muslims struggle to pave their way. I have chosen to include a response to the following question which was posted to the participants:

> I would like to ask you a sort of a challenge question, as follows:
>
> There is an opinion that says that the only way the Muslim community can improve itself, become relevant and have an impact is by a complete "paradigm-shift." On the other hand, another opinion says: "no, the sensible way to change is by taking gradual steps inside the community, that the community can absorb and most importantly can preserve the unity of the community."
>
> What do you think? Which opinion do you support, and why?

The response from an American Muslim activist, Imran Khan, working in the area of public school reform and education policy in Texas, was quite insightful;

> True and meaningful change will happen when we experience paradigm shifts within ourselves as individuals first. Communities are made up of individuals, and organized communities are made up of organized individuals. What America does impacts the world, and what Muslims in America will do will impact Muslims worldwide. I think a mentality shift for Muslims in this country (especially those of us who refer to ourselves as activists) is long overdue. I also think that this mentality shift has little to do with religious verdicts and/or interpretations/understandings. It is a shift from "dream land" to reality. I think we need Muslim health care professionals and doctors to solve our current healthcare debate and be at the forefront of reform. We need Muslim scientists to step up to the plate and speak in reference to nuclear weaponry and disarmament. We need Muslim educators and teachers to speak up and act in regards to failing public schools in our country and a broken educational system that has a pathetic ranking among industrialized/developed countries in the world. These areas

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> are where real work is needed, and unfortunately where Muslims in general are nowhere to be found. On a positive note, I think that a generation of qualified Muslim professionals, who are in remembrance of Allah (swt), has arisen. As Obama stated, "we are the ones we have been waiting for." I think we just need to organize and move...[1]

1.2 Islamophobia

Islamophobia has all the earmarking of racism. Islamophobia, meaning the unfounded fear of Islam and Muslims, expresses a variety of acts of racism, discrimination and intolerance toward Muslim individuals and communities.[2]

It holds a few as representing 1.6 billion. “It expects every Muslim to explain or apologize for the actions of [at most] a few thousand.”[3] Because it sees all Muslims as one, it demands to know who speaks for Islam; terrorism; oppression etc. One might argue that it demands a hierarchy to police itself; yet it is against any group, organization or government for such chain of command because it fears and cannot tolerate any influence or power from Muslims, especially in America. Although the diversity and the range of views i.e. religious, social or political, are further expanded because “Muslims come from differing regions, races, nations, ethnicities and cultures, speak different languages, follow strict or liberal interpretations of Islam, or don’t follow any at all, though they consider themselves

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[1] **From:** Imran Khan <iuk0162@gmail.com>
To: Karen Danielson < >
Cc: ihindi@gmail.com
Sent: Tue, March 22, 2011 8:03:06 AM
Subject: Re: Thesis: American Muslims
Salam Sr. Karen, I apologize for not getting back to you sooner. I was out of town and away from a computer this past week. You have my permission to use the quote below. Currently, I am involved with an education (non-faith-based) non-profit organization based out of Dallas, TX, USA. I am working in the area of public school reform and education policy. Please let me know if I can be of further assistance. Sincerely, Imran Khan.

[2] Kalin, Ibrahim. "**A New Form of Racism: Islamophobia**." Today's Zaman 27 09 2007: National; International.

[3] Siddiqui, page 22.

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Muslim."[1] Islamophobia holds Islam and Muslims to another standard. The diversity of other religious communities is seen as normal, yet for Muslims it is used as "evidence" of "divisiveness and disarray."[2] According to the Runnymede Trust[3] Islamophobia is sometimes seen as natural and this is problematic in the West when anti-Islamic or anti-Muslim hostility is accepted as natural and "normal"; Islamophobia becomes a challenge for everyone.

The spread of the fear of everything Islamic i.e. Islamophobia, is a real intrusion in the daily lives of many American Muslims. Job discriminations, alienation within neighborhoods, school children being bullied on the playgrounds. CAIR has launched a series of special reports on Anti-Muslim stereotyping, harassment and hate crimes. First with "A Rush to Judgement" following the Oklahoma City bombing in which American Muslims were first targeted as the terrorist and then followed by "The Price of Ignorance" and "Unveiling Prejudice".[4]

1.2.1 Stereotypes

Americans have an image of the Muslim woman. It does not necessarily stem from a hate or prejudice but more often than not it is a stereotype that has slipped into the American psyche either through Hollywood films or other forms of Western media. What really causes the damage is when someone of authority defines the suspected or unconfirmed with absolutism to explain and substantiates the assumptions that ignorance brought to the forefront. Two months after September 11, 2001, First Lady of the United States, Laura Bush declared, "We are now engaged in a worldwide effort to focus on the brutality against [Muslim] women and children by the Taliban."[5] Mrs. Bush now invoked, what was once conjecture, and confirmed it as reality. She linked the tribal conditions of war-torn

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[1] Ibid.
[2] Siddiqui, page 22.
[3] **Islamophobia: A challenge for us all**. Summary. The Runnymede Trust. London: The Runnymede Trust, 1998.
[4] Smith, page 176.
[5] Haddad, page 3.

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Afghanistan to a worldwide dilemma of Muslim women everywhere. She linked the violent circumstances to Islam, the religion of 1.6 billion people and she initiated a cause that all Americans should stand behind. This cause, "liberating Muslim women from their bondage…and saving women of Islam became part of the post 9/11 Western agenda."[1]

When asked by **PolicyMic**[2] What is the largest misconception that Americans hold about Islam that you'd like to dispel? Nathan Chapman Lean tells:[3]

> That Islam and America are incompatible. I find that too many people believe Islam is foreign — that it exists "over there," beyond the borders in the "Muslim world." That is, I believe, the basis for fear: it is quite natural to fear what we see as foreign and know little about. Islam is one of the fastest growing religions in the United States and is woven into the fabric of American culture. Jermaine Jackson, Lupe Fiasco, Dave Chappelle, Bernard Hopkins, Shaquille O'Neal, and Rima Fakih i.e. Miss USA 2010 are all American Muslims.[4]

Another stereotype is that of the violent terrorist. With the extraordinary pressures of economic and political challenges in contemporary times, its no wonder that there have been individuals who have reacted with extremism. However, "extremism is the direct outcome of a deficiency in thinking. It is antithetical to *da'wa* and therefore should not exist in normal

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[1] Haddad, page 3
[2] PolicyMic is an online platform for debate and high-quality political discussion that highlights the country's sharpest young thinkers – liberals and conservatives alike. http://www.policymic.com/beta/about .
[3] http://www.nathanlean.com/Nathan_Chapman_Lean/Nathan_Chapman_Lean.html Under the auspices of a Critical Language Scholarship to Tunisia, he gained advanced fluency in Arabic and began working on this graduate thesis, *Islam and the West: Problematizing a Discourse of Dualism*. The work was nominated for a 2010 thesis prize with the Conference of Southern Graduate Schools. Lean has authored numerous articles on Islam, cultural diplomacy, American foreign policy, and Middle East relations. From Morocco, he reported on the 2011 revolutions in North Africa and on the Western Sahara Conflict. He is the co-author (with celebrated expert on Iran, Jalil Roshandel) of *Iran, Israel, and the United States: Regime Security vs. Political Legitimacy* (Praeger) and the author of *Monster Mosques and Muslim Madness: How an Industry of Islamophobia Manufactures Fear*.
[4] "**Interview with Author, Jazz Musician and PolicyMic Writer Nathan Chapman Lean**." 08 02 2011. PolicyMic. 23 03 2010 <http://www.policymic.com/beta/global-affairs/interview-author-jazz-musician-and-policymic-writer-nathan-lean>.

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conditions."[1] Every "religious" claim to support terrorism, the likes of 9/11, embassy bombings etc. contradict Islamic teachings and are gross misrepresentations of Islam. Jihad is not war against unbelievers or infidels. The concept of jihad i.e. literally means a struggle, forbids violence except 1) religious oppression 2) Oppression in the pursuit of freedom and 3) when people's land is unjustly and forcibly taken away. If Muslims have the Islamic right to fight, *jihad*, there are strict regulations forbidding suicide *(Qur'an 4:29)* and the killing of civilians; the women, elderly, children etc.[2] Every state in all of history, in every location has had and still has conditions for war, but it is illogical for *jihad* to be associated or linked with terrorism. Moreover, the Qur'an forbids mischief in the earth *"...and do not commit abuse on the earth, spreading corruption." (Qur'an 7:74).* There is abundance of evidence in Islamic sources to rendering the fundamentally erroneous nature of terrorist ideology. Yet the stereotype exists; can we call all Irish Catholics; terrorists, all Italian-Americans; mafia, all white Americans; racists, all Southerners; Ku Klux Klan, all African American or Latinos/Latinas; gangsters? Is it reasonable to ask American Muslims to police themselves based on a stereotype? Would we ask the Latino community to police itself based on a stereotype? Should America return to the McCarthy era? Moreover, is it reasonable to hold Homeland Security hearings on the radicalization of American Muslims based on a stereotype?

1.2.3 Politics

Just what is it about Islam that can get the West, Western media and politics all in a furry? Terrorism. Jihad. Hijab. Polygamy. Shari'a. Honor killings. Stoning. Oppression of women. These are complex and emotion-laden issues that revolve, primarily, around two subjects: Violence and Muslim women. "…the veil is the most stereotypical symbol of what

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[1] Al-Qaradawi, Yusuf. **Islamic Awakening between Rejection and Extremism**. Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1991, page 5.
[2] Bukhari. "**Book of Jihad**." Bukhari. Sahih Bukhari. n.d.

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it means to be a Muslim woman"[1] and violent "fundamentalism" is the most stereotypical symbol of what is Islam. These two features are the key issues of stereotypes that American Muslims must overcome. At the same time, these are two features that seem to stir Americans to do something, politically or otherwise. Interview with Author, Jazz Musician, and PolicyMic Writer Nathan Lean[2] explains:

> From the threat of "Islamofascism," to the construction of "monster mosques" in midtown Manhattan; from fear of "stealth jihads," to the supposed looming catastrophe caused by "terror babies;" from "creeping Sharia" that will allegedly replace the Constitution, to recurring pictures of the Twin Towers crumbling into a sea of flesh and ash, these images and many like them are products of an industry of Islamophobia — a growing and interconnected network of neoconservative politicians, right-wing media pundits, and evangelical religious leaders united in a quest to exhume the ghosts of 9/11 and provoke fears of Muslims and Islam for personal gain. Simply put, fear sells books, wins re-elections, increases tithes, and raises television rankings. The purpose of this book[3] is to take the reader inside the minds of the individuals that comprise this web of propagandists, revealing their tactics and exposing their pasts.[4]

Billy Graham, evangelical Christian, who rose to celebrity status because of the radio and television broadcasts of his sermons for much of the second half of the 20th century, is also well known for consistently having the chance to spend personal time advising 12

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[1] Haddad, page 12.
[2] http://www.nathanlean.com/Nathan_Chapman_Lean/Nathan_Chapman_Lean.html From pianist to peacemaker.
[3] ***Monster Mosques and Muslim Madness: How an Industry of Islamophobia Manufactures Fear*** Copyright © 2010 Nathan Chapman Lean. http://www.nathanlean.com/Nathan_Chapman_Lean/Monster_Mosques_and_Muslim_Madness_files/download.pdf retrieved 4/1/11.
[4] **"Interview with Author, Jazz Musician and PolicyMic Writer Nathan Chapman Lean."**

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American presidents since Harry S. Truman, including President Barak Obama. His is one of America's favorite persons. Recently, his son, Franklin Graham, also an evangelical preacher, called Islam "an evil and wicked religion".[1] TV evangelist and ex-Baptist minister, Pat Robertson, has called Islam a violent faith.[2] This is what is meant by an *Industry of Islamophobia*. Furthermore, the accusation of personal gain is evident, for example, as illustrated by the article, *Islamophobia Alive and Well in Congress,*[3]

> As it turns out, one of the four congressmen involved,[4] Myrick, has a vested interest in the fear-mongering that they are perpetuating. Their cry of wolf comes in advance of a book that includes a forward by Myrick. The author of the book is Dave Gaubatz, who, according to Pascrell, writes in the book that Islam is "a terminal disease that, once spread, is hard to destroy" and advocates that the practice of Islam should be punishable in prison.
>
> **A clear agenda**
>
> Need I say more? These people have a clear agenda that does not tolerate diversity in our country. They suffer from a level of ignorance that shames the U.S. Congress, and sends the wrong message to the rest of the world: that perhaps Bush was wrong when he stood in that mosque and said Muslims are not seen as enemies.[5]

In an Interview with Intisar Rabb, following section, she refers in one word what the problem is: "politics".[6]

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[1] Siddiqui, page 23.
[2] It would not be surprising if either of these men collected tithes in their religious organizations to "*fight Islam"*.
[3] Soliman, Ahmed. "**Soliman: Islamophobia is alive and well in Congress**." 09 10 2009. NorthJersey.com. 02 12 2009 <http://www.northjersey.com/news/opinions/soln_102209.html>.
[4] Myrick, one of four congressmen who called for a "national security threat" press conference.
[5] Soliman.
[6] See section 1.2.4 Shari'a: Islamic Law, Intisar Rabb, "In a word, I would say politics."

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There are two sides to every story. The one side that is typically less of a concern to politicians and policy makers is the predicament of American Muslims, who have their civil liberties attacked because of this “industry of Islamophobia” and “have been victims of racial profiling and frequent identity mix-up at airports and border crossings, where they are harassed and sometimes detained.”[1] This side until recently has been largely ignored, remarkably however, Illinois Senator Dick Durbin announced on March 29, 2011, he will be holding the first Congressional hearings to ever deal with the civil rights and liberties of American Muslims.[2]/[3] He denies that it is in response to the most recent and outrageous, investigation of a domestic threat of “radicalization of the American Muslim Community” by US Congressman, Rep. Peter King,[4] Chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, however the former practically coming on the heels of the later of the two is difficult to rebuff . One should be investigating Peter King’s qualifications as chairman or who put him in charge; researcher’s prerogative to sarcasm. According to The Washington Post’s Eugene Robinson, “King once complained that, ‘we have too many mosques in this country [U.S.]” and on another occasion offered the ludicrous opinion that, ‘80 to 85 percent of mosques in this country are controlled by Islamic fundamentalists’.”[5] Furthermore, regarding this 80-85 percent, King told Sean Hannity, FoxNews, that “they [American Muslims] make up the enemy living among us.”[6]

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[1] Siddiqui, page 11.
[2] Yeakley, Richard. "**Muslims Welcome Senate Hearings on Civil Liberties**." 23 03 2011. USAToday. 23 03 2011 <http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2011-03-24-muslim_23_ST_N.htm>.
[3] See Appendix Z.
[4] Goldiner, Dave. "Rep**. Peter King to hold hearings on 'radicalization' of American Muslims, critics fear witchhunt**." 19 12 2010. NYDailyNews.com. 27 02 2011 <http://articles.nydailynews.com/2010-12-19/local/27084926_1_radicalization-anti-islamic-ibrahim-hooper>.
[5] Balles, Paul J. "**Scapegoats and Witch Hunts**." March 25, 2011. Balles, Paul J. "Scapegoats and Witch Hunts." March 25, 2011. http://www.veteranstoday.com/author/balles/. Retrieved March, 2011.
[6]Ibid.

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Coincidentally, an August 19, 2010 Time Magazine Poll indicated that 43 percent of Americans view Muslims negatively.[1] Is it any wonder that currently 14 states are seeking to follow suit to the passing of Oklahoma state law preventing state courts from using international law and *shari'a* law to be used as judicial precedent in decisions and rulings? 70% of voters in Oklahoma voted to pass this amendment, which means these voters believe the nefarious anti-constitutional nature of *shari'a* law,[2] that is either without comprehension at all or simply believing blindly.

1.2.3 *Shari'a*: Islamic Law

In a live interview with Intisar Rabb, *Setting the Record Straight on Shari'a*,[3] by The Center for American Progress,[4] she explains in no-un-simple terms for everyone what *Shari'a* means for Americans. Intisar Rabb, an amazing example of the American Muslim woman[5] is a member of the law faculty at Boston College Law School where she teaches advanced constitutional law, criminal law, and comparative and Islamic law. She is also a research affiliate at the Harvard Law School Islamic Legal Studies Program and a 2010 Carnegie Scholar. She is particularly interested in questions at the intersection of criminal justice, legislative policy, and judicial process in American law and in the law of the Middle East and the wider Muslim world. When specifically asked why Shari'a is getting such a bad rap in America right now, since it has virtually gone un-noticed in media or politics for decades if not centuries in America, she replied:

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[1] Sussman, Dalia. "**Time Poll: Many Americans has suspicious view of Islam**." 19 08 2010. The New York Times. 20 03 2011 <http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/08/19/time-poll-many-americans-have-suspicious-views-of-islam/>.
[2] Houk, John R. "**The evil of sharia in American courts**." 19 03 2011. slantright.com. 23 03 2011 <http://www.slantright.com/index.php?name=News&file=article&sid=3084>.
[3] Steenland, Sally. "**Setting the Record Straight on Sharia Interview with Intisar Rabb**." 08 03 2011. Center for American Progress. 08 03 2011 <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/03/rabb_interview.html>.
[4] *The Center for American Progress* is dedicated to improving the lives of Americans through progressive ideas and action. Building on the achievements of progressive pioneers such as Teddy Roosevelt and Martin Luther King, our work addresses 21st-century challenges such as energy, national security, economic growth and opportunity, immigration, education, and health care.
[5] Please see full interview with Intisar Rabb in Appendix R.

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> **In a word, I would say politics.** Leading up to the midterm elections in November 2010, there was the mosque controversy in New York and the specter of Muslims taking over. We saw an anti-Sharia law in Oklahoma. The anti-Sharia bill in Tennessee goes a lot further. In my view a lot of it had to do with the politics of equating *Shari'a* with Muslims, with terrorism, with national security, and with an attempt by some, especially on the right, to rally support around a wedge issue.[1]

Taha Jabir Al-Awani, *Towards a Fiqh for Minorities*, explains *shari'a*:

> Muslims are aware that the *Shari'a* laws are based on clemency and temperance rather than oppression and severity. They fully realize that the fulfillment of religious obligations is concomitant upon human ability (*Qur'an 64*: 16 and *2*: 286). Muslims also know that the *Shari'a* permits all that is clean and wholesome and forbids what is harmful, and so is aimed at making life easier and more convenient. It encourages and promotes good and positive conduct and forbids all that undermines society (*Qur'an*7: 157).[2]

Furthermore, Yusuf Al-Qaradawi explains the need for more developments in the sciences of *fiqh;* Islamic jurisprudence, in his book *Priorities of the Islamic Movement in the Coming Phase*.[3] Rather than necessarily advocating a *fiqh* of minorities, Qaradawi advocates for a *fiqh* of balances; contextualizing *fiqh*, and therefore subsuming the *fiqh* of minorities within. Could this talk about *fiqh* developments and progresses be in response to the fact that Islam and Muslims are facing a global context like never before? What is for certain, is that *fiqh* is

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[1] Steenland, Sally. "**Setting the Record Straight on Sharia Interview with Intisar Rabb**." 08 03 2011. Center for American Progress. 08 03 2011 <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/03/rabb_interview.html>.
[2] Al-Alwani, Taha Jabir. **Towards a Fiqh for Minorities**. Page xiii.
[3] Al-Qaradawi, Yusuf. **Priorities of the Islamic Movement in the Coming Phase**. Swansea: Awakening Publications, 2000, pages 45-52.

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very important to the observant Muslim and not so observant. It is needed to help understand what genuinely applies to Muslims living outside of Islamic convention.

1.2.4 Why Do They Hate Us?[1]

Bush's foreign policies after 9/11 were seen so negatively by the Muslim world, not because of the UN approved war in Afghanistan or because Bush said, "See, we love—we love freedom. That's what they didn't understand. They hate things; we love things. They act out of hatred; we don't seek revenge, we seek justice out of love."—Oklahoma City, Aug. 29, 2002,[2] but it was because of "the unquestioned" backing of Israeli prime minister, Ariel Sharon's brutal crackdown of the 2002-2003 Palestinian *Intifadah*" (Siddiqui 13-14) and what the world knows today as the invasion of Iraq under complete false pretense (Siddiqui 14) in addition to what follows in the next three paragraphs.

Adding fuel to the fire were the Bush administration's handling of *Abu Ghraib* prison, "extraordinary rendition"- or the sub-contracting torture abroad, Guantanamo Bay and even it's overt or tacit support of intensified repression on Muslims in Chechnya i.e. Russia, the West Bank and Gaza i.e. Israel, Zinjiang i.e. China, the Ferghana Valley i.e. Usbekistan, and Mindanao Island i.e. the Philipines.[3]

Bush's administration has not only been viewed by many as incompetent but Muslims in America today continue to pay the price and have paid a heavy price. Shortly after 9/11 the Bush administration developed the registration of non-citizen and non-green cardholders with ties to Muslim countries. "80,000 responded, 14,000 were picked for deportation."[4] 50,000 Muslims from or associated with Syria, Libya, Iran, Iraq and Sudan were fingerprinted and of these 8,000 were interviewed with coercive means, asked about their bank accounts, mosque

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[1] Countless numbers of American and Western writers have been asking this question.since 911.
[2] **Bushisms Words of Wisdom from George W Bush**. 01 04 2011 <http://stuffucanuse.com/all_jokes/jokes%20bushisms.htm >.

[3] Siddiqui. Page 15.
[4] Siddiqui, page 16.

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attendance and their opinion of the U.S. and abroad without charge.[1] 400 convictions, 40 related to terrorism and 100 detainees died in custody of which 26 classified as criminal homicide. And until today the average American is unaware. ACLU[2] executive director Anthony Romero said that the government "practiced selective prosecution"[3]

The American media followed Bush's propaganda and no wonder that by December 2004, a time when most of the abuses were exposed, "44 percent of Americans believed in restricting the civil rights of Muslim Americans, according to a nationwide survey by Cornell University."[4] **For these and the** affects of the US Patriot Act which suspended or curtailed civil liberties, ignoring some of the most treasured democratic principles, have left the American Muslim communities bewildered and not "Muslims hate our freedom".

The direction of *da'wa* and dialogue in America must now address from where are all these policies stemming? Is it stereotypes and ignorance? Is it religious hatred? Is it Islamophobia and an Islamophobic industry? Does every American Muslim now have to become a civil liberties expert? Islamic scholar? Journalistic news investigator? New goals of *da'wa* and dialogue must be forged. The "*dar ul-Islam*"/ "*dar ul-kufr*"/ "*dar ul-harb*"[5] discourse just doesn't fit in the Western or a global context. It is too close in relation to Bush's "you're with us or against us"[6] and some are alluding that this very type of discourse is causative as well. Zahid Parvez explains it in this manner:

> …this has led to a tendency to divorce Islam from social life [a global context], and a frustration of efforts to address contemporary challenges.

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[1]Ibid.
[2] American Civil Liberties Union http://www.aclu.org/about-aclu-0 retrieved April, 2011.
[3]Siddiqui, page 16.
[4] Press, Associated. "**Poll shows U.S. views on Muslim-Americans** ." 17 12 2004. USNews on msnbc.com. 15 08 2009 <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/6729916/ns/us_news/>.

[5] "*dar ul-Islam*"/ "*dar ul-kufr*"/ "*dar ul-harb*" This researcher uses this description for the commonly understood term as traditionalists.
[6] Siddiqui, page 21.

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> These have, in turn, created an inability to keep abreast of the times and hence, for Muslims to play any constructive role in world affairs.[1]

Somehow, these isolationist practices of parts of the American Muslim community are reminiscent of the Amish in America's heartland,[2] peaceful yet completely detached from society or worse the likes of David Koresh and the Branch Dividians,[3] a Protestant sect, from Waco, TX.

These needed changes are both challenging to American Muslims and exciting; although somewhat of an enigma. The question is how does the American Muslim minority move from a reactionary state to a pro-active state? The intent of this thesis is to draw attention to these two most negative aspects i.e. *Islam is violent; and Islam oppresses women* and how women, Muslim women, American Muslim women, the younger generation of American Muslim women in particular, can turn these two, aforementioned, factors around and specifically in the area of interfaith dialogue.[4]

1.2.5 How Well Are American Muslims Challenging Extremists?

According to Joseph A. Bosco[5], attorney and frequent contributor to The Christian Science Monitor[6], the continued controversies surrounding Islam and Muslim extremists have

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[1] Parvez, Zahid. **Building a New Society An Islamic Approach to Social Change**. Leicestershire: Rivival Publications, 2000, page 65.
[2] The Amish are known for simple living, plain dress, and reluctance to adopt many conveniences of modern technology.
[3] During a final FBI assault left 75 dead with 25 children under the age of 15 years old.
[4] See section 2.3 Muslim Women Preachers: Chapter Two
[5] Joseph A. Bosco, a national security consultant, worked on Muslim outreach and strategic communications in the office of the secretary of Defense in various assignments from 2002 to 2010 and served on several interagency committees on US-Muslim relations.
[6] The Christian Science Monitor is an international news organization that delivers thoughtful, global coverage via its website, weekly magazine, daily news briefing, email newsletters, and mobile site.
The Monitor is global, both in practice and in spirit.
In an era when the mainstream media has narrowed its lens, we're convinced readers yearn for the opposite. This global perspective comes naturally; the Monitor's founder, Mary Baker Eddy, explained our mission this way:
"To injure no man, but to bless all mankind."
While we may not land on the doorstep or in the inbox of all mankind (though we'd like to), our aim is to embrace the human family, shedding light and understanding with the conviction that truth is the beginning of solutions. This conviction has served our readers and story subjects well over the years, winning us seven Pulitzer Prizes and more than a dozen Overseas Press Club awards.

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"spurred a new exchange of recriminations: Muslims tolerate extremism; non-Muslims suffer from Islamophobia," in his article, "*How Well Are American Muslims Challenging Extremists?"*[1] While neither statement is fair, he writes, that non-Muslim Americans are legit to ask their fellow Muslim citizens, "just what is the connection between Islam and those who murder in its name?"[2]

The next point that Mr. Bosco makes seems to have some validity. That all Americans- including Muslims- "deserve candor, lest we become, in Attorney General Eric Holder's misapplied term, "a nation of cowards.""[3] Meaning that if American Muslims refuse to discuss or hold dialogues then the divide will just grow. He quotes Jordan's King Abdullah's 2002 end of Ramadan speech, "[Americans] hear the hatred spewed by groups mistakenly called Islamic Fundamentalists. In fact… they are religious totalitarians, in a long line of extremists of various faiths [not just Islam] who seek power by intimidation, violence, and thuggery." Presidents, Bush and Obama, have stated that America is not at war with Islam. "Nevertheless, the king worried about a growing Western perception [Islamophobia]."

Bosco, also, comes up with a preposterous *guesstimate,* unimaginable to the average Muslim. He says there is reason to worry because even if *only* 1/10th of 1 percent of the

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Mrs. Eddy's statement contains another distinguishing feature. The purpose of our journalism is to "bless" not "injure." That is central to how we cover the news:

- We're unrelenting but fair.
- We're excited by what's new and developing - yet always mindful of the history behind us.
- We're broad in scope but written for the individual.
- And we make a point of resisting the sensational in favor of the meaningful.

We're also free to be an independent voice, devoid of the corporate allegiances and pressures that critics say too often skew today's media.
Join us for a daily distillation of a changing world - your world. We'd love to have you come along. And please let us know what you think. http://www.csmonitor.com/About/The-Monitor-difference Retrieved January 28, 2011.

[1] Bosco, Joseph A. "**How Well Are American Muslims Challenging Extremists?**" The Christian Science Monitor 10 November 2010: http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/Opinion/2010/1110/How-well-are-American-Muslims-challenging-extremists.

[2] Bosco.

[3] Bosco.

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world's 1.6 billion Muslims are terrorists then the rest of the world's Muslim population, 99.9%, "face the challenge in delegitimizing these would-be terrorists or holy-warriors."

Is he suggesting that Islam, as a religion, should police itself? It's adherents? All 1.6 billion? That is sounding like a state. Should Muslims have to accept that 99.9% of the world's Muslims are not terrorist and only 0.1% are terrorists? If we do, then consider that 1/10th of 1 percent of 1.6 billion is 1.6 million so called killers acting in Allah's name. Although, this is quite a delusional number to most reasonable people, we should not ignore his point any less; that the vast majority of Muslims themselves are responsible for correcting the "so-called" predominate extremist views. Note the word, views. He continues to say that while Muslim leaders have made several statements which condemns terrorism in the U.S. it is met with little follow-through. Exactly what follow-through is he looking for? It becomes evident through statements like these that non-Muslim Americans are seeking further redresses or some manner of rectifying these fringe elements of the Muslim community by the American Muslim population. He continues by stating the Muslim leaders in America "spend more time pointing out alleged Islamophobia than working to undermine violent jihadists."[1] Now we have two excellent points, that are found within this thesis, and are expounded in this statement and answer the questions, first, are American Muslims stuck in a reactionary state? And, second, should American Muslims in particular practice intra-faith dialogues, seeing as they are the most diverse Muslim population in the world, to arrive at some manner of unity regarding the roots of extreme "*fundamental Islamists*" and extract these mentalities[2] or mindsets from the Muslim populations?

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[1] Bosco.

[2] Mentality: Perceptual framework; a habitual way of thinking or interpreting events peculiar to a person or type of person, especially with reference to the behaviors that it produces. MSN Encarta Dictionary retrieved January 28, 2011 http://encarta.msn.com/encnet/features/dictionary/DictionaryResults.aspx?lextype=3&search=mentality .

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After all, non-Muslims may be justified for asking if “there is something in Islam that makes it more susceptible to extremist interpretations than other religions?”[1]; since Muslim extremists have come from diverse national, cultural, educational and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Bosco goes on seeking to answer questions like, “are too many American Muslims in an identity crisis? Do they identify more with “bad Muslims” than with “good infidels”?”[2] And he remarks that American Muslims should be asking themselves “whether their conditional words and their eloquent silence have inadvertently provided moral or rhetorical support to the terrorists?”[3]

He concludes by saying that it is not Christians, Jews, or other non-Muslims “who are waging war against moderate Islam”- it is the “radical Muslims” who does so. While most American Muslims can perceive how inadequate and full of assumptions Bosco is, they have, however, been failing to fully vocalize to the contrary and therefore, they must realize that in order to adequately combat this seemingly growing attitude in the States, they must engage further in dialogue on many levels and newer methods to clarify what is Islam and who are Muslims so that it is better understood why American Muslims perceive “a war on Islam” and not just a war on terrorism. Currently, as the situation appears, the American media will not do enough of this job no matter how much American Muslims speak out. Therefore, Interfaith dialogue must be in the mix and according to the writer of this thesis; a priority in *da’wa* and dialogue.

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[1] Bosco.
[2] Bosco.
[3] Bosco.

CHAPTER TWO

WOMEN

2.1 Introduction

"Like the status of women in all the world's religions; in Islam and Muslim societies patriarchy played and in many cases continues to influence the status and roles of women."[1] John Esposito continues in this article, *Muslim Women Reclaiming Their Rights*, to suggest that female reformers today are progressively challenging patriarchy [in Muslim societies and communities around the globe] in the name of original Islam. He describes how women surrounding the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) worshiped actively and were educated in the mosque as well as taking on socially and religiously active roles but that

> gradually women's religious role and practice, particularly their access to education and the mosque, were severely restricted. Male religious scholars cited a variety of reasons, from moral degeneration in society to women's bringing temptation and social discord, to restrict both their presence in public life and their access to education and the mosque.[2]

In this quest, "American Muslim [Sunni] Women are increasingly looking at the wives of the Prophet"(pbuh)[3] who are perceived as women of strength, professionalism and learning; formidable role models. These examples bring forth validation for today's women to fully participate in public areas and even in leadership roles. "The public roles being adopted by [American] Muslim women are vital in the process of defining, and redefining, the meaning of [Islam in America]".[4]

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[1] Esposito, John. "**Muslim Women Reclaiming Their Rights**." 14 August 2009. The Islam Awareness Blog. 15 08 2010 <http://theislamawareness.blogspot.com/2009/08/john-esposito-muslim-women-reclaiming.html>
[2] Esposito
[3] Haddad, page 9.
[4] Haddad, page 121.

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ISNA, Islamic Society of North America,[1] which has changed from original convictions of avoiding involvement in American Society to "advocating active participation for both men and women"; for the first time elected Ingrid Mattson,[2] in 2001, Canadian-born convert to Islam, to serve as Vice-President to ISNA and later in 2006, she was elected to serve as President, a position she currently presides over. She argues, that in order for Muslim women to make a legitimate case for women in leadership roles, they must be Islamically educated, particularly in the interpretation of scripture and Islamic law. "Renewal, she says, is an Islamic paradigm for legitimate social change."[3] And "patriarchy and its legacy, legitimated in the name of religion, remains alive in many countries although it is also progressively challenged in the name of religion"[4] as well.

Many promising contributions have formed in North America that promote women as active contributors implementing Islamic values. The Muslim Women's League founded in 1999 is one such organization. It participates in global efforts to improve women's lives, networks with numerous organizations, publishes materials about alternative perspectives on issues of concern to Muslim women, promotes a range of educational forums, and supports spiritual/study retreats and dialogue.[5] Personally, I have mentored young American Muslim women either as a High School Islamic Studies teacher at Universal[6] and Aqsa[7] Schools in

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[1] The Islamic Society of North America has served the Muslims of [North America] for well over forty years. It is one of the largest national organizations for Muslims in North America providing many invaluable services to the Muslim community of North America. http://www.isna.net/ISNAHQ/pages/About-Us.aspx retrieved March 23, 2011.
[2] Ingrid Mattson Director of the Macdonald Center for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations; Professor of Islamic Studies and Christian-Muslim Relations; B.A. (University of Waterloo), Ph.D., (University of Chicago) *Specialization:* Islamic Law, Early Islamic History.
[3] Haddad, page 123.
[4] Esposito.
[5] Haddad, page 125.
[6] Universal School: Universal School provides classes from preschool through 12th grade. Universal is known as the pioneer in taking bold steps toward establishing and refining North America's Islamic school movement. http://www.universalschool.org/schoolprofile.asp. retrieved March 23, 2011.
[7] Aqsa School: Aqsa School is a community made up of board members, parents, students, staff, and community members who are dedicated to providing a comprehensive education in an Islamic environment which is safe, orderly, and well-equipped to serve the needs of students from pre-school through high school with grades six through twelve being exclusively for girls. http://www.aqsa.edu/. retrieved March 23, 2011.

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Chicagoland or as a Junior and Senior Girl Scouts of America troop leader in which a central theme has always been, *Contribution IS the Solution*. I taught this due to Islam's natural pro-active approach to social reform and change.[1] Growth in participation from American Muslim women has spread to many, many NGO[2]s in civic, health, social, and educational agencies. In fact, there are innumerous examples that American Muslim women are the educators and behind the scene's movers and shakers. Another example of American Muslim women taking an active role is Bahija Abdus-Salam, "I am here to represent the Muslim woman," at the Million Mom March Against Gun Violence in Washington DC where she served as the Islamic Coordinator, "and to let people know that we are not oppressed. We are a part of this society and we have a place in this society."[3] American Muslim women are at the forefront of formalizing their activities that they have been active for years; and most noteworthy, formalizing their leadership roles.

2.2 The Dilemma of Feminism

This researcher believes that American Muslim women are going to take this authority whether the Muslim communities in which they live or Muslims globally, approve and support their endeavors. Asifa Quraishi, attorney in San Fransisco, is critical of Muslim leadership. She "approves of Muslim women working [along side] Western feminists toward the achievements of common goals and argues strongly that the Muslim community needs to overcome taboos against women holding significant leadership positions."[4] This is a strong indication that now is not a time for alienating Muslim women who look outside Islam for validation and affirmation in their public presence. It is a sad state of affairs and the leadership of Muslims, not only in the West but everywhere should take heed of this phenomenon. Muslim women, American or otherwise, will only find an artificial form of

[1] See Chapter Three: 3.1 *Da'wa* and Dialogue: An Islamic perspective.
[2] Non-Governmental Organization.
[3] Haddad, page 128.
[4] Haddad, page 126.

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contentment in Western feminist movements just as American women of color do not find full satisfaction.

Will Western feminism satisfy the Muslim woman who longs for independence from her nearest male relative; who longs for affirmation in her own right; who seeks to break free from a restricted and relegated prospect of a future wanting to carve out her own future and not be constrained by what men have dictated to her? Feminism in the west is a movement of socio-political intellectual discourse formed primarily from “white-Anglo” women. It is a “white” woman’s history. It is not the history of “women of color” or the history of “women of ethnicity” it is simply a white North-American woman’s movement; that set the foundation for feminism. Decades of thought and theory have created the framework of feminism by primarily white women and their issues with patriarchy. The paradigm has been set. Then an attempt to add ethnicity and faith and culture to the paradigm was taken on in the ‘60’s and ‘70’s.

> There is a real void within mainstream feminist discourse that has marginalized the very women whom it has allegedly sought to empower and “save.” Feminism is still very much a white woman’s movement and discipline; it has tokenized women it sees as “of colour” in its attempt to be more inclusive and universal. This is not progress: this is not equality. This is a kinder racism: unintentional, and really a part of an institutionalized mentality and epistemic history, but racism nevertheless.[1]

Another Muslim woman’s voice blogged recently describes a similar feeling. As she describes her early passion for Western feminism she eventually came to the realization that the ideology and theocracy of Western Feminism was not for her. “As much as I loved it, I felt somehow foreign. The material we discussed was something I couldn’t relate to entirely –

[1] Saeed, Sana. "**Bad romance Feminism and women of colour make a bad pair**." 14 01 2010. The McGill Daily. 23 03 2011 <http://www.mcgilldaily.com/2010/01/bad_romance/>.

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even though I considered myself a secular agnostic. I felt that my roots and my traditions were calling to me."[1]/[2]

However the risk of losing one's religion is a very possible reality and should concern the Muslims worldwide as even many women in traditional Muslim countries are being courted by Western feministic philosophy. Muslims will no longer remain practicing within one culture; one convention, this is reality. Muslims are on the horizon of facing a global reality just like the rest of the world. American Muslims and Muslims in the West will prove that Huntington's Clash of Civilizations cannot happen. Harron Siddiqui's book, Being Muslim, clearly implies that Islam, and Muslims, can co-exist with the "modern" world.[3] **This is not appeasing the Western world; this is not being apologetic**; this is being part and parcel of the societies where Muslims are living; this is Islam spreading. Muslims are in the Western world, **they are the Western world**. The dichotomy of "us vs. them"; "you're either with us or against us" mentality simply should not be a part of the discourse of Muslims globally.

Tensions between Islamic traditions and practices and American concepts of women's rights continue to be engaged, argued about, harmonized, negotiated, and renegotiated in varying ways. Unfortunately, prevalent in this dialogue are views that tend to be reductionist-ones that discredit Islam as a peculiarly sexist religion, or Western feminism as a hazardously ideological movement that pits women against men.[4]

On the other hand, the Muslim feminist is labeled by an imprint of the destructive social nature left by the impact of the colonial experience and perceived influence of the

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[1] "**Islamic Feminism: the feminism I relate to**." 21 03 2011. Peace x Peace. 21 03 2011 <http://www.peacexpeace.org/2011/03/islamic-feminism-the-feminism-i-relate-to/print/>.
[2] *Islamic Feminism: The Feminism I Relate to.* Lana Abu Ayyash. A Jordanian woman leader reflects on her path to Isalmic feminism, including how she founded Sister Power, the online social network for Muslim women.
[3] Siddiqui, inside cover.
[4] Haddad, page 102.

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Western societies as Muslims immigrate to the West. This imprint not only affected the Muslim world economically, politically and militarily but more importantly socially and culturally. An enormous impact is taking place in the discourse regarding the role and status of Muslim women in the public sector. Is the West singularly the root cause; the blame of these discourses? And what of the global context and modernity? Was it not Wilfred Cantwell Smith[1] who said way back in 1956, "Unless Muslims manage to come to terms with the Western society, it would be impossible for the religion that was so necessary for their spiritual well-being, to flourish."[2] W.C. Smith, one of the most influential contributors to interfaith dialogue and comparative study of religion.

2.3 Muslim Women as Chaplains

A dear friend of mine from Chicago just posted on her facebook that she was offered a residency position for chaplaincy at a local hospital. She is getting a Master's degree in Theology with a focus in pastoral counseling. In America, there is currently a need for trained religious leadership particularly in law and theology with an intimate understanding of American culture and are placing this need at the top of their priorities. It is quite revolutionary that American Muslim women are seeking to fill these needed roles. "Although the understanding of most Muslims is that women technically cannot be imams,[3] Muslim women are helping meet this need for trained leadership by serving as chaplains in various kinds of institutions, including prisons, universities and colleges, and hospitals."[4] Although a huge breakthrough, the biggest obstacle is gaining support from the local communities. Muslims, American or otherwise, simply are not used to a woman religious leader. Dr. Jeffery Lang poignantly stated in his book, Losing My Religion, regarding the status of

[1] **Wilfred Cantwell Smith** (July 21, 1916 – February 7, 2000) was a Canadian professor of comparative religion who from 1964-1973 was director of Harvard's Center for the Study of World Religions.
[2] "**Annual Report on the state of Dialogue**." 2008. <https://members.weforum.org/pdf/C100/Islam_West.pdf/>.
[3] See section 3.9 Muslim Women Preachers .
[4] Haddad, page 133.

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women in Islamic communities, “This propensity to bow to the most conservative view is particularly evident in the treatment of women in the American Islamic community.”[1] And he continues later with some clarification, “Muslim women are debarred from positions of leadership in many communities, and rarely are women included on boards of directors or executive committees.”[2]

Most imams in the states are currently untrained in their multifaceted roles at providing for their congregations other than in Qur’anic recitation and rudimentary degrees in hadith, *seerah* or *fiqh* let alone counseling, psychology or even a grasp of administrative skills or program development; leaving aside an intimate understanding of American culture altogether, as most *imams* have been “imported” from overseas; they many times lack even basic English language skills. Mosque and Islamic center boards are struggling with these issues. “The need for better training facilities for imams in the United States is widely recognized, although at present the opportunities to receive such training, particularly when communities are under severe financial restraints, are extremely limited.”[3]

Straight from the FAQ page of the new Muslim Chaplaincy Association,

> A chaplain is a professional who offers spiritual advice and care in a specific institutional context, such as a military unit or a college campus, hospital or prison. Although chaplains often provide religious services for members of their own faith communities, the main role of a chaplain is to facilitate or accommodate the religious needs of all individuals in the institution in which he or she is working.[4]

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[1] Lang, page 7.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Smith, page 156.
[4] **Muslim Chaplains Association FAQ**. 2005-2011. 23 03 2011 <http://muslimchaplains.org/index.php/FAQ.html>.

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The need for a Muslim chaplaincy association is apparent due to the fact that not only is Islam the fastest growing religion in the world. “Islam is the fastest growing major religion among American military personnel.”[1] According to a study, entitled "The Mosque in America: A National Portrait," which is part of a larger study on American congregations called *Faith Communities Today*, has been coordinated by Hartford Seminary's Hartford Institute for Religion Research. The number of mosques in America has grown by 25 percent in the last seven years and the study indicates the population of American Muslim at 7million.

> Additionally, a March 2001 gathering of Islamic scholars, military personnel, prison and hospital chaplains and Muslim members of the Board of Trustees at Hartford Seminary confirmed the acute need for competent and trained Muslim chaplains to serve the needs of Muslims in prison, college and hospital settings as well as the military.[2]

The Islamic Chaplaincy Program at Hartford Seminary is the best place to train for Islamic Chaplaincy. However, on this same FAQ page a very disheartening disclaimer is seen, “Despite this obvious need, currently there are no accredited chaplaincy programs for Muslims in the United States.”[3]

2.4 Changes and Challenges for the American Muslim Woman

As a convert/revert to Islam, I have never felt that Islam is something to divvy up life into separate and distinct roles prioritizing some over others, although, it may have been what is said about Islam. I have always seen Islam as finally bringing my life together. While I have a feminine nature due to creation, it is this femininity or aspect of my nature is the best characteristic to look after a home and raise children but I also have a human nature that is

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[1] Ibid.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.

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best characterized to affect my society in a moral and positive manner; a Qur'anic command *3:110*. The later not secondary nor the former primary but it is my nature as a Muslim to bring balance to the two. I have never understood the need to be "mother"[1] over and above the need to be a relevant citizen; "mother" being a characteristic of being a member of humanity.

"Muslims are increasingly questioning the virtue of religion and are turning to secular and Western ideologies such as nationalism and liberalism, in pursuit of material comforts and individual dignity."[2] The purpose for Jeffery Lang's book, *Losing My Religion*,[3] is in its entirety is based on this postulation stated above.

As mentioned in the previous section, Muslim women, Western Muslim women even more so, as opposed to Eastern Muslim women who are conditioned in some manner to live by convention, will take a place in an open society whether "Islam" or Muslims guide them or give them the right. With that said, Muslims today must develop the discourses and the means in which to support these women within the limits of Islam or risk losing them;[4] hence the real need for a book like, *Losing My Religion*. American Muslim youth seem to be struggling in this troubled water as well.[5] "Lang asserts that to effectively respond to the general malaise [toward faith] of American-born Muslims, the Islamic establishment in America needs to be willing to listen to the doubts and complaints of the disaffected."[6] This approach will benefit more than the "covert and uniformed" talks currently taking place or not taking place at all and stifle the innuendo of disbelief[7] or irreligiousness. Lang emphasizes the importance "to be candid and objective and not to evade controversy; for to

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[1] "mother" in its broadest meaning and not restricted to parentage e.g. *Mothers of the Believers*.
[2] Khan, M.A. Muqtedar. **American Muslims Bridging Faith and Freedom.** Beltsville: Amana Publications, 2002, page 8.
[3] Lang, cover.
[4] Section 2.2 The Dilemma of Feminism.
[5] See 1.2.6 regarding American Muslim identity crisis.
[6] Lang, backcover.
[7] Disbelief: *takfir.*

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inadequately state the case for or against a specific position, especially when it challenges convention, only serves to further alienate the skeptical."[1] The skeptic: the woman who is unconvinced to wear hijab; or the youth who is numb from the accusations against Islam's virtue. Can American Muslims or any Muslim afford to watch this divide grow; watch this identity crisis expand, sitting back and blaming the West or Feminism or any one of the other multiple excuses? For the Muslim community to continue in this manner is simply a state of denial.

The changes and challenges of the 20th and now the 21st century are indeed rough for the Muslim woman. "Cultural wars"; Islam and the West, "Civil wars"; secularists and Islamists.

> Muslim women have to bear the brunt of travails associated with these conflicts. Either they lose their husbands and sons on the battlefield, or they lose their freedoms and dignity in the social arena. Tragedy and irony are two dominant themes of their existence. At times, they are victims of those who seek to protect them and at other times, those who seek to emancipate them; oppress them. Even when it comes to historical processes, Muslim women are caught in the struggle between the imperialism of modernity and the intransigence of traditions.[2]

The Taliban depriving women from education[3] and the conforming of hijab. The Turks banning hijab for education. The French, the epitome of freedom and standards, attacking her religious freedom. East or West. Secular or religious. She is bombarded by a world full of double standards. "As Muslims struggle to recover from the effects of colonialism, their

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[1] Lang, backcover.
[2] Khan, page 87.
[3] Rasekh, Vincent Iacopino and Zohra. "**EDUCATION, A HEALTH IMPERATIVE**:." JSTOR 3.2 (1998): 98.

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societies cry out for political and social change."[1] Muslim feminists do not help either; either they are too westernized, mimicking feminism of the West that manifests a disregard and disrespect for Islam or any religion; or they are too traditional, reacting to the absence of Islam in the West and forcing to defend a traditional Muslim culture that only supports the negative stereotypes. The typical Muslim woman, east or west, is suffering from both sides; she is caught in between.

The only way out of this dilemma is for American Muslims to establish educational programs that do not deny the controversy but provide intellectual discourses and by bringing more women to the discussion tables. For too many centuries there has been an overwhelming domination of men in Islamic legal studies; this is a fact. This is not characteristic of a *middle*[2] *community.*[3] Balance regarding interpretation of authentic sources in Islam must be achieved for it is balance that brings about the best understanding. Muslim women, American Muslim women, young American Muslim women must seek authenticity and validation and grasp authority over Islamic knowledge and sciences in order to succeed.[4]

"Interestingly most [if not all] Muslim intellectuals and scholars insist that Islam is a holistic religion"[5] and it is to be lived in a comprehensive manner. Secularism is rejected on the grounds that there is neither "separation of church [or religion] and state" nor a disassociation of the social context and the self i.e. meaning Islam is not a private matter in Islam. However, if the role of women in Islam is principally to the interior, or excluded from public spheres in an effort to relegate her contributions to primarily in the home; to protect her from the vices of society; to "honor" her male counterparts, then her "religious manifestations" would also be bound to the interior, "essentially remaining private and Islam

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[1] Khan, page 87.
[2] ***Qur'an*** *Chapter 2:143 "And thus We have made you a median [i.e. just] community that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you."*
[3] Peter, Frank. "**Leading the Community of the Middle Way**." The Muslim World 96 (2006): 707-736.
[4] ***Qur'an*** *Chapter 87:14 "He has certainly succeeded who purifies himself."*
[5] Khan, page 91.

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then becomes a private affair for women."[1] Is the contradiction not obvious? If her participation in society is regulated to only necessity, then we must ask to whose necessity? Hers or society's? Is it possible that her absence is exactly what is missing to counter social ills? Are Islam's traditions misinformed regarding the ayah "And thus We have made you a median [i.e. just] community that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you." *(Qur'an 2:143)* Are women to be excluded as witnesses? No, they must be present, exhibiting the establishment of good and the forbidding of evil. Muslim women must be clearly seen in society, not some enigma for humanity to wonder and speculate.

What can be done with regard to this dilemma? Unfortunately, Western feminist have an easy answer: reject Islam; reject patriarchy; worship the self. Muslim women who cannot find validation in the traditional discourses of Islam may find this an option. The other alternative then, would be a return to the Islamic mechanism of *ijtihad*; "a creative but disciplined intellectual effort to derive legal rulings from those sources while taking into consideration the variable imposed by the fluctuating circumstances of Muslim society."[2] This *ijtihad* must be formally and seriously undertaken by Islamic intellectuals and scholars regarding the role of women in society and set clear tone; which they have been failing, for common understanding. American Muslims must challenge Islam's religious and legal scholars anew! There needs to be recognition that these divisive understandings of a woman's role are causing the estrangement of too many contemporary Muslim women to the greater Muslim community.

In the Author's Introduction of *Towards a Fiqh for Minorities*,[3] Taha Jabir Al-Awani states that Muslims have never attracted so much attention as they do today, because for

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[1] Khan, page 91.
[2] Al-Awani, Taha Jabir. **Ijtihad**. Herndon: International Institute on Islamic Thought, 1993, page 4.
[3] Al-Awani, **Fiqh of Minorities**, page xi.

centries Muslims were a dominant world power. Traditionally Muslims have lived among Muslims in the majority. He advocates collective *ijtihad* with experts from various social science fields and claims that there are strong ties between aspects of society; cultural traditions and conventions, and legislation that these aspects must have an influence on scholars, researchers and legislators with regard to various factors or circumstances affecting the minority Muslims differently from the majority.[1] Al-Qaradawi expresses concern regarding the practicing of religion in strict and extreme measures; he talks about having a sympathetic understanding regarding the abilities, limitations and circumstances of others, in his book.[2] Further advices, again, comes from Taha Jabir Al-Awani in his book,[3] regarding the various intellectual discourses regarding Islamic shari'a; the higher principles, purposes and perspectives as well as prospects, warning against division and *takfir*. In Qaradawi's book,[4] he goes into details of the current need for *ijtihad* and the dynamic discussions that must take place regarding *fiqh* and *shari'a*. Mohammad Hashim Kamali, simplifies the understanding of shari'a to the layman in his book, *Shari'ah Law An Introduction*. The interesting and underlying tone of his book puts to rest the often times western xenophobic understanding that *shari'a* is this "trans-historical, reified notion that stands for all eternity in opposition to gender equity, democracy, and all that stands at the center of Western consciousness."[5] These authors and their works along with a suitable understanding of the objectives of *shari'a* will lend to the American Muslim and non-Muslim greater understanding of the moral virtue, justice and public interest that is Islam. The one factor that is missing and it does no service to neglect, is the gender dynamic. Muslim women have been

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[1] Al-Awani, **Ijtihad**, page 4.
[2] Al-Qaradawi, **Islamic Awakening between Rejection and Extremism**, page 6.
[3] Al-Awani, **The Ethics of Disagreement in Islam**, page 18-19.
[4] Al-Qaradawi, **Yusuf. Priorities of the Islamic Movement in the Coming Phase.** Swansea: Awakening Publications, 2000, chapter two.

[5] Kamali, Mohammad Hashim. **Shari'ah An Introduction**. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2008, page vii.

absent for too long from these discourses. Could it be, however unintentional, that it has just been convenient for male scholarship to refer women and these contemporary issues facing them to a position of posteriority and disfavor? Its like the situation described by Dr. McCloud regarding *intra*-faith dialogue.[1] Muslims are willing to dialogue with "the other" male or female yet they are unwilling to dialogue with Muslims from differing backgrounds and ideology. Some scholars of Islam are willing to dialogue among differing schools of thought and ideologies yet unwilling to discourse with those of the opposite gender about issues affecting the opposite gender.

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[1] Section 3.3, Interfaith Dialogue Development in America.

CHAPTER THREE

The Da'wa and Dialogue Relation

3.1 An Islamic Perspective

The Qur'an is wrought with dialogue. This researcher postulates that the main methodology of Islamic *da'wa* is through dialogue. They go hand in hand. *Surah* after *surah*, Allah (swt) lays emphasis on the use of conversation between two or more parties for conveying the message of Islam: Allah and the angels; Allah and Adam (pbuh); Allah and Iblis, the accursed; prophet Ibrahim (pbuh) and his father; prophet Musa (pbuh) and Khidr; the two men of the garden in *surah al-Kahf;* Musa (pbuh) and Fir'awn to name a few. In many of the dialogues, a purpose for conveying the message of the Oneness of God is clear but there are also dialogues in which cooperation and a straight manner of communication is the primary tool of *da'wa* as found in the transmission of the story of prophet Yusuf (pbuh) with his father and brothers and even with the governor of the Egyptian province. Exemplary behavior and manners in everyday life is how the message of God is carried. The life of the prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is overflowing with examples; his method to his mission. We might just recall his conversations with his neighbor, the Jew; or his unbelieving uncle, Abu Talib; or his approach with the commander of the enemy, Abu Sufyan, even at the conquest of Mecca, even while the later had been persecuting and fighting the Muslims. These are indications of the tolerance, forbearance and patience but also the association, collaboration and even alliances put forth by the prophet Muhammad (pbuh) on every level of society.

Conveying the message of Islam is how Islamic *da'wa* is characterized.[1] Islamic *da'wa* is not about converting people to Islam. The Qur'an clearly states that *"There shall be*

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[1] This researcher postulates that while *da'wa* literally means invite; it takes on the meaning to perform (practice what you preach).

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no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion."(2:256) Furthermore, the idea that Allah's intent is to lay guidelines to a pluralistic society is clear from the following verse as well.[1]

> *And We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], the Book [i.e. the Qur'an] in truth, confirming that which preceded it of the Scripture and as a criterion over it. So judge between them by what Allah has revealed and do not follow their inclinations away from what has come to you of the truth. To each of you We prescribed a law and a method. Had Allah willed, He would have made you one nation [united in religion] but [He intended] to test you in what He has given you; so race to [all that is] good. To Allah is your return all together and He will [then] inform you concerning that over which you used to differ. (5:48)*

Regarding the four basic themes for training a dai'i which have been identified in the book, *Training Guide for Islamic Workers*[2] as the following:

1. A spiritual uplifting.
2. Knowledge and proper understanding of Islam.
3. A working knowledge of contemporary ideologies and religions [including religious movements].
4. Having skills and tools of da'wa.

These topic were found to be necessary to "Islamize the American experience and to mold Islamic information into the contemporary context."[3] Therefore, when dialogue is viewed as an act of *da'wa* the individual will feel closer to Islam, forced to gain a better understanding of Islam and Muslims, expand their understanding and knowledge of the other all while developing skills that make him a more trusted and socially oriented citizen.

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[1] This verse is of particular importance in section 3.7 Pluralism and Interfaith Dialogue.
[2] Altalib, page 4.
[3] Ibid.

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About the book, *Toward a Global Civilization of Love and Tolerance*, by M. Fethüllah Güllen, Father Thomas Michel[1] writes on the back cover:

> This book has a double purpose. On the one hand, it is a call to Muslims to a greater awareness that Islam teaches the need for dialogue and that Muslims are called to be agents and witnesses [*dai'i*] to God's universal mercy. On the other hand, the book is an invitation [a *da'wa*] to non-Muslims to move beyond prejudice, suspicion, and half-truths in order to arrive at an understanding what Islam is really about.[2]

It is not a farfetched impression that Islam emphasizes dialogue with not only those who approach us but that Muslims must initiate and reach out as Allah has said in the Qur'an, *"O Mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another."(49:13)* How is it then? That this knowledge of one another take place without dialogue and without the telling of who we are? This concept is universal and inclusive to all of mankind and neither is it focused singularly on conveying the message of Islam with the intent to proselytize, without regard to the opinion, response or feedback of the other; the knowing of one another means reciprocal. Even so, a deeply sincere Muslim would convey the message of Islam through all aspects of his life simply by his or her character; as Islam is meant to be comprehensively applied in the lives of the believers. And as such cannot ignore that all of mankind is created equal. Divergent behavior may only permitted in the case of full out physical attack to the Muslims and regulated by the terms of *jihad*; no one individual can call for a *jihad*. [3]

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[1] Fr. Michel SJ, is on the Academic Council of the ACenter for Muslim-Christian Understanding at Georgetown University, Washington D.C. as well as on the Advisory Board of the Center for Civilizational Dialogue at the University of Malaya, Kuala Lampur, Malaysia among many other.
[2] Güllen, Fethüllah M. **Toward a Global Civilization of Love and Tolerance**. Sumerset, NJ: The Light, Inc., 2004, backcover.
[3] See section 1.3.2 Stereotypes and what is *jihad.*

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Participating in dialogue, and even leading, seems to be the prescription of Islam. Perhaps one of the most well known verses from the Qur'an regarding dialogue is: *"Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good* ***instruction****, and reason with them* ***in a way*** *that is best." (16:125).* Furthermore, *"Indeed, Abraham was a [comprehensive] leader…" (16:120*[1]*)* The commentary in the translation of this verse i.e. embodying all the excellent qualities which make one an example to be followed and elucidating to the reciprocation of communication; **dialogue**. In addition, *Sahih* Muslim recorded that Abu Hurayrah said that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said: *"Whoever among you witnesses an evil, let him change it with his hand. If he is unable, then let him change it with his tongue. If he is unable, then let him change it with his heart, and this is the weakest faith."*[2] This indicates that Islam is pro-active and there is an emphasis on speaking, as well.

American Muslims must change from isolated communities; where little is known about them and many stereotypes are said of them. As too they must change the "old-school" way of thinking that Islamic *da'wa* is about converting people to Islam. It is so easy for one to sit on the side lines and hope someone else will do the engaging. Because Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world[3] and literally in the face of the nation daily; it behooves the Muslim communities in America to dialogue. Not a single member of the Muslim community can ignore this call, especially not the American Muslim women.

3.2 Dialogue development in the American Muslim Community

Most books initially written for *da'wa* purposes by Muslims about Christian Muslim dialogue or Interfaith dialogue the last quarter of the 20th century have been written mostly to gain converts to Islam. One such notable writer, H.M. Baagil M.D. writes to "dispel darkness" of the non-Muslim faiths, particularly Christianity. Much of what has been written

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[1] Insertion of the word [comprehensive] is original f.rom translator of the Qur'an derived from the word *ummah.*
[2] http://www.downsum.com/index2.php?action=viewcommentsx&story=1781477029364090 Retrieved 3/14/11.
[3] http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/9704/14/egypt.islam/ retrieved April 2011

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by him and other writers of *da'wa* and dialogue during this time period has been scrutinized solely through the lens of the *"dar-ul-Islam"/"dar-ul-kufr"* Muslim mind-set rather than in a global context.

There have been the exceptions however, the likes of Ahmed Von Denffer[1] and later, like Tariq Ramadan, whose recent publications are: "*The Quest for Meaning: Developing a Philosophy of Pluralism*", [2] *"What I believe",*[3] *"Radical Reform, Islamic Ethics and Liberation"*.[4] However, in the early '70's one could hardly find a Muslim scholar of theology specializing in Christianity or Judaism but the West was living in its "hay-day" of Orientalism.[5]

Furthermore, many a writer have begun recently to write about the need for the Muslim psyche to change from this *"dar-ul-Islam" / "dar-ul-kufr / "dar-ul-harb"*[6] attitude toward a mind-set that is more outreaching and participatory in a global context.[7] Additionally, books like *Towards a Fiqh For Minorities,*[8] are "a long awaited contribution in the area of *fiqh* that has become essential for the well-being and development of Muslim communities living in non-Muslim lands, especially in the West."[9] So this idea of Muslims

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[1] His series of documents, published by The Islamic Foundation in the early '80's, regarding dialogue between Christian and Muslims was quite insightful for the time.
[2] Penguin, UK, 2010.
[3] OUP USA (Nov 2009).
[4] OUP USA (Nov 2008).
[5] Talbi, M. "Islam and Dialogue: Some Reflections on a Current Topic." Talbi, M. Islam and the Modern Age. 1972.
[6] Abode of Islam, Infedelity, and War respectively. The fuqaha who developed these terms in the Abbasid period were regarded by later ulema as 'full-fledged mujtahids' (mujtahid-e mutlaq), and that is why for many centuries no scholar raised any question as to the actuality of these terms. The epitome of the classic "You're either with us or against us" attitude.
[7] Similar books like the following list:
Yassine, Abdessalam. ***The Muslim Mind on Trial. Justice and Spirituality Publishing***. Iowa City, Iowa 2003.
AbuSulayman, AbdulHamid A.***Crisis in the Muslim Mind***. IIIT, Herndon, Virginia 1993.
Al-Qaradawi. ***Priorities of the Islamic Movement in the Coming Phase***. Awakening Publications, London, UK 2000. Esposito, John L. and Mogahed, Dalia. ***Who Speaks for Islam?***. Gallup Press, New York, NY 2007.
Nadwi, Syed Abul Hasan Ali. ***Muslims in the West: The Message and Mission***. Islamic Foundation, Leicester, UK 1993.
Abou El-Fadl, Khalid. ***The Place of Tolerance in Islam***. Beacon Press, Boston, MS 2002.
Ramadan, Tariq. ***To Be A European Muslim***. The Islamic Foundation, Leicester, UK 1999.
[8] Al-Awani, **Toward a Fiqh of Minorities**.
[9] Ibid., Foreward page v.

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becoming part and parcel to Western societies is relatively new. No wonder the shape and form of Muslim *da'wa* and dialogues in the West have been amending during the last three decades. Consequently, dialogue has changed from a time when American Muslims were eager to point out "that in the Bible, Jesus (pbuh) never claimed to be God; that Jesus did not die on the cross; that the miracles performed by Jesus (pbuh) were also performed by other prophets; and that Jesus, himself, prophesized the advent of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)."[1] To be fair, these efforts were "not to mock Jesus and his teachings or to point out false charges, misrepresentation and outright lies against Allah"[2] but to indicate the extent at which Christianity is antithetical to Islam on points of *'Aqeedah* or Islamic Creed.

The problem, however, is that these precise points, aforementioned, are not Christianity. Christianity is an evolution of doctrines and beliefs which have some foundations in the teachings of Christ and the writings of the Bible's New Testament but not exclusively. Furthermore, the meaning of Christianity to any one Christian can be vastly different than the next. Unfortunately, these early days of American Muslims participating in active "dialogue" with Christians in the U.S. were in fact not dialogues at all but rather debates bent on disproving Christianity and gaining converts to Islam. These early days of "dialogue" you could say American Muslims simply did not understand the psychology of change i.e. one changing his/her religious beliefs let alone fully comprehended what are the truer meanings are of *da'wa* and dialogue particularly in a Western context.[3] Until today, east or west, the average Muslim is little aware of the immense differences of doctrine in Catholicism to any one of the Protestant denominations; or the variations of Protestant denominations for that matter. This researcher, as a convert/revert to Islam, recalls struggling for years, beginning in the late '80's, with the American Muslim community, mostly

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[1] Baagil, H.M. **Christian Muslim Dialogue**. H.M. Baagil, 1984.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Johnson, Steve A. **Da'wah to Americans: Theory and Practice**. Plainfield: Islamic Society of North America, 1984, page 5.

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immigrant, over what is dialogue and what can appear to be offensive to a non-Muslim and whether this "searching for converts" approach was even Islamically ethical. I believe my insight into this matter was due to the fact that not only was I raised as "the other" but I had planned my early life out as a Christian missionary, attending Faith Baptist Bible College and Theological Seminary,[1] Ankeny, Iowa in the Bible Belt of America; I saw things from both sides of the fence so to speak.

Interfaith dialogue is an exchange of ideas and opinions regarding religion with the aim of reaching amicable, harmonious mutual understanding. Listening, by default is a part of dialogue, and must take place for dialogue to be whole; listening which is non-judgmental; is of humanizing the other and of affirming or validating their freedom of religion. The capacity to listen to *'the other'* is a foundational skill for developing healthy relationships, removing tensions and resolving conflict. "Compassionate Listening is a process rather than a product… Rather, it engages the participants in processes that have each side seeing the humanity of the other, even when they disagree," Rabbi David Zaslow, Ashland Oregon, Advisory Board for the Compassionate Listening Project.[2]

However, various and controversial assessments of measure applied to similar, even nearly identical methodologies and/or situations, may yield dramatically different results due to specific community character, environmental influences and even age/profession/education differences of the participants. [3] Let's imagine, for example, a particular religious institution bent on proselytizing their faith, inviting Muslims or Hindus or Buddhists for a "dialogue" event where there is less affirmation of the guests than there is of the attempt to establish the

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[1] http://www.faith.edu/ retrieved April 2011.
[2] Hwoschinsky, Carol. "**Listening with a Hear: A Guide for Compassionate Listening**." The Compassionate Listening Project. 10 10 2009 <http://www.compassionatelistening.org/?s=Rabbi+David+Zaslow>.
[3] I recall attempting to use a "tried and true" activity/ice-breaker with a delegation of visitors to Jordan from Denmark that totally back fired and did not assist the dialogue. This specific ice-breaker has yet to fail in dialogue groups with dozens of groups of all ages, genders, professions or educational groups in the states but with this specific group from Denmark in Jordan, it did not motivate or stimulate more than a dozen words from one mere individual out of nearly 30 participants; maybe it was a language barrier; maybe it was cultural .

"superiority" of the hosting faith. Communications may take place but common ground is not achieved nor the affirmation of the right to freedom of religion. Or another scenario, amongst theologians less concerned about what each participant has to say or share than they are concerned about what they have to say. Again, listening has not really taken place, especially when judgments or incorrect conclusion have been drawn.

3.3 Interfaith Dialogue Development in America

Interfaith dialogue has been growing in popularity, particularly in the States and the West, since the end of WWII and the Immigration Reform Act of 1965. Vatican II, as well, with the release of its document, Nostra Aetate, which is a declaration on the relation of the Catholic Church to non-Christian religions. However, interfaith dialogue has not been met without criticism; there are many opponents to interfaith dialogue, more so are the indifferent, unconvinced, and complacent voices. Furthermore, it has many faces, gone through quite contradictory objectives at times, and has been molded and morphed by its participants over the years. It has had large diversified participants, as well, from the old to the young; the academic; the theologian; to the lay; even non-religious participants and organizations or institutions have participated in interfaith dialogue in some form or another. Initiators mostly being from the Catholic and Christian faiths, however, the most active in numbers appears to be those from the Jewish and Islamic faiths[1]. One of the oldest and largest networks of community organizations in the country is United Power for Action and Justice,[2] an independent, non-partisan, self-funding organization of churches, synagogues, mosques, civic, neighborhood, health, and ethnic institutions from across Cook County, Illinois i.e. known as Chicagoland, is a prime example of successful and active interfaith dialogue.

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[1] See Appendix A Table 3- Growth of Interfaith Activities in the U.S. and U.K. from Hartford Seminary *FACT*.
[2] **United Power For Action and Justice**. 10 10 2009 <http://www.united-power.org/>.

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3.3.1 Interfaith Dialogue: Advantages and Obstacles

It is said that there are many examples of positive outcomes from interfaith dialogue as well. The interfaith dialogues formed mainly by American Muslims after the Oklahoma City bombing helped the U.S. Government protect American Muslims following the attacks of September 11, 2001.[1] Personally, this researcher has witnessed, as an American Muslim woman involved in interfaith dialogue prior to 911 an outpouring of support toward the Southwest Chicago Muslim community by non-Muslim interfaith participants and their acquaintances. Lay people who called and confirmed that because of their involvement in interfaith dialogue they know, in no-uncertain terms, that terrorism is not the way of Islam. Additionally, these men and women coordinated their faith communities to come and listen to the Muslims explain the differences between politically motivated acts of violence and Islam as a Faith. Hundreds walked away thanking the Muslims for helping to reduce the tensions and allowing the acceptance of Islam as a good religion and its followers as good people.

As mentioned, every participant may have varying goals and objectives toward interfaith dialogue; however, a common element has consistently been religious literacy. Countless times interfaith dialogue participants walk away commenting, “I didn’t know that.” Or “You can learn something new every day.” Religious literacy gives something to a people that help reduce the tensions which arise from the fear of the unknown. Interfaith dialogue is an opportunity for providing perspective and can give the participant objectivity when swimming in the Western media of misrepresentations and stereotypes and can dispel the propaganda of Islamophobia.

However, Christian/Muslim interfaith dialogue or Christian/Muslim/Jewish interfaith trialogue is not a fix-all. There are drawbacks as well. Currently it brings to the table

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[1] III, Vincent F. Biondo. "**American Muslim Politics Enters the Mainstream**." Princeton University, 2006, abstract.

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tolerant, open-minded participants. Occasionally biased parties will participate. Years ago, in the '80's, when interfaith activities were sprouting up all over college campuses in the U.S., they earned an undesirable reputation of causing conflict, rather than promoting harmony. Participants, back then, tended to try to outdo, or out prove their faith-based counterparts. Tensions rose as to who was right and who was wrong and the debate style took hold. Today most interfaith dialogues participants will adamantly negate this practice and look at each other as partners for peaceful co-existence even while maintaining one's own religious convictions. Harold Vogelaar of the Lutheran School of Theology says that even while coming from a "community that was socially, culturally, politically and religiously conservative…the more at home and secure I am in my own faith; the more deeply rooted I am in Christ; the more open and hospitable I can be to all people."[1]

Light years of difference between this approach of interfaith dialogue and the following shared personal experience on the college campus of SIU-C[2] in the late '80's when, as coordinator for events for the MSA i.e. Muslim Students' Association, a program was presented as a debate with guest speakers, Anis Shorrosh, a Palestinian Evangelical Christian and Dr. Jamal Badawi, Egyptian-Canadian Professor; who so happens to be one of the most popular Muslim speakers in the West for the past three decades. Shortly, following the debate, the Campus Ministries, a student organization that reaches across practically every university campus in the States as does the MSA, raised a petition to "never again" participate in any activities which involve the MSA. A proposed by-law that most likely never made the books but this action attested to the hostility developed from this perceived imbalance of results as Anis Shorrosh was not matched to the intellectual suppositions

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[1] Vogelaar, Harold. **Open Doors to Dialogue**. Occassional Paper. Lutheran School of Theology. Chicago: Lutheran School of Theology, 2004, page 394.
[2] SIU-C Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.

postulated by Dr. Jamal Badawi regarding Islam as a true revealed religion. Clearly this hostility is not, nor ever should be, an objective to Christian/Muslim interfaith dialogue.

So typically, we can say that the intolerant are absent from real dialogue, although can be present as hecklers and opponents to dialogue. Attracting the "right " participant is a current dilemma and an obstacle to real interfaith dialogue today because it is these prejudicial, close-minded individuals that are the most in need of a balanced prospective that interfaith dialogue brings to the table. Regarding a balanced group of participants, Dr. Aminah McCloud states in her article, *Reflections on Dialogue*, [1]

> I quickly learned that African Americans were also largely invisible at Christian-Muslim dialogues in Chicago. Blacks were also not present in any of the audiences in dialogues. Christian-Muslim dialogue seemed to me to be a middle-aged, white mainline Protestant affair with South Asian Muslim immigrants.[2]

It is not just an inclusion/exclusion issue along race lines, a disturbing occurrence to say the least, but also, Dr. McCloud continues,

> preparations for the 100th anniversary of the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions had begun. Fortunately for me, I was asked to join the Muslim committee. This committee, however, was not representative of even the Muslims in Chicago let alone the nation, or the world. Evidently, for members of this group of dialoguers, everyone who was not a Sunni immigrant was suspect. They moved to exclude most African American Muslims, as well as Shia and Sufi Muslims, declaring that they did not know them. While this was the starting point [of the conference], many in the group would later abandon these positions because the steering committee reminded them that the whole

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[1] See also interview with Dr. McCloud Chapter Three: Da'wa and Dialogue: Pluralism and Interfaith Dialogue.
[2] McCloud, Dr. Aminah. "**Reflections on Dialogue**." The Muslim World (2004), page 337.

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> event was about dialogue, not nurturing their ethnic and intra-religious prejudices. Remarkably, none of the immigrant Muslims were willing to actually dialogue with those Muslims they initially sought to exclude, although they were available for dialogue with non-Muslims.[1]

Not only must American Muslims succeed in dialogue with people of other faiths in America, but they must also learn to dialogue with each other. Too many times, one group of Muslims wants to reign superior to another. The excuse to behave this way may be due to the hadith of the Prophet,

> Abdullah bin Amar (RA) relates that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said "Surely things will happen to my people as happened earlier to Israelites, … verily the Israelites were divided into 72 sections but my people will be divided into 73 sections, all of them will be in the fire except one." The companions asked, 'Who are they O Messenger of Allah,' Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "They are those who will be like me and my companions."[2]/ [3]

Controversies arise in abundance over a hadith as such, unfortunately, too many Muslims use this as an excuse to classify differences as disbelief.[4] However, this hadith does make not reference to disbelief. Too many are looking to not only classify the wrong but to assert the one group saved. Again, there is no way to determine. Why would Muslims delay intra-religious dialogue with one another? Why do American Muslims, like the world over of Muslims, not seek strength in diversity? At least when it comes to the substantiation of Islam and Muslims in America? Dialogue does not mean conformity or compliance. Dialogue is not about squelching another under. These are questions beyond the scope of this thesis,

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[1] McCloud, Dr. Aminah. "**Reflections on Dialogue**." Page 336.
[2] collected by Abu Dawud also present in Ibn Maja.
[3] Another version of this hadith: "My ummah will be divided into seventy three sects. All of them will be in the Fire except one." [**Saheeh Muslim**, no.976].
[4] *Takfir*: disbelief

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however, the phenomenon must be considered and the recommendation made. The closest authoritative attempt to the affirmation of intra-faith dialogue among Muslims, that this researcher has come across, is the launching of the Amman Message[1] by King Abdullah II of Jordan. A brief excerpt describes the document, "In it over 180 leading scholars, representing 45 countries, and supported by *fatwas* from 17 of the world's greatest Islamic authorities, reached, for the first time in history, a signed unanimous consensus on a number of critical issues." And

> Parallel to the Amman Islamic Message, in 2005 H.M. King Abdullah II also launched the Amman *Interfaith* Message. The purpose of this message is not merely to diffuse tensions between Muslims, Christians and Jews — the followers of the religions of Abraham (pbuh), and the believers in the One God — nor simply to promote tolerance between them, but rather to establish full acceptance and goodwill between them. For Muslims, Christians and Jews together comprise around 60% of the world's population, and establishing acceptance and goodwill between them means in effect establishing peace and friendship over most of the world.[2]

It is interesting to note the reference "nor simply to promote tolerance" as no grouping of people simply wants to be tolerated.[3]

Another obstacle to interfaith dialogue is the availability of the participants and the generation gap. Therefore, sometimes the average age of the non-professional dialoguer i.e. interlocutor or the non-academic participant is 75 years. The general public's participation is more difficult. Not only do the struggles of balancing work and family, but religion competes with their time for social activities as well. For much of the general population the time for

[1] **The Amman Message**. Declaration. Amman, Jordan: GMT The Royal Hashemite Court, 2005.
[2] Ibid.
[3] See section 3.7 Pluralism and Interfaith Dialogue

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religion often does not go beyond major holidays or rites of passage. Regarding the religiously adherent, their own faith commitment is satisfactory and ideas outside their own chosen faith seem unnecessary. Often ministers are unconvinced to put the time and effort into interfaith dialogue and unfortunately without the support of the faith leaders, lay people usually will not attend.

3.3.2 American Muslims in Interfaith Dialogue: examples

However there are many remarkable youth interfaith dialogues or interfaith activities like the infamous Eboo Patel's I.F.Y.C.[1] but even he seems to agree that interfaith efforts should be service-based and limited to areas of common concern[2] rather than creating a religiously literate participant. Patel even goes as far as saying that it is necessary to ban theology, politics and disagreements from interfaith dialogue. However, while reducing interfaith dialogue to commonalities or strictly having activities revolving around common ethical concerns is comfortable and safe; important elements for understanding the other is absent and resembles dialogue less and less. Although community service and working together is some of the best interfaith activities that can be produced from interfaith dialogue, this researcher supposes that it should not be considered the only objective and this idea can be supported from countless sources[3]. Few if any outreach organizations do not consider interfaith dialogue as an intricate factor in all intents and purposes. The Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago, for example, has extensive outreach activity in interfaith dialogue. The CIOGC's Interfaith Committee is one of the "most active and vital committees within the Council."[4] One youth, Aatifa Sadiq, so eloquently sums up this joint endeavor,

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[1] I.F.Y.C. Interfaith Youth Core: Chicago-based, international non-profit organization working to build mutual respect and pluralism among religiously diverse young people.
[2] Patel, Eboo and Mariah Neuroth. The Interfaith Youth Movement. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006.
[3] See Appendix B – Interfaith and Outreach Organization Objectives.
[4] **Interfaith Engagement Through the Council**. Website reporting; www.ciogc.org. Chicago: The Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago, 2009.

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dialogue and service, in the following article captured by the CIOGC's recent e-newsletter, dated Wednesday, February 23, 2011[1] where she affirms, not the belief but the faith others.

> Growing up, I [used to] equated interfaith with gatherings where I would explain my beliefs over and over again. [Now] I believe interfaith cannot be confined by a time, a place, or a topic. Rather, it needs to be an attitude of openness towards alternate ways of being. I [now] reflect on interfaith as a means to produce change in the community. Thinking about this type of reciprocal interfaith on a communal level can truly bring about solidarity and positive change. … As an organizer and participant, I have been able to witness youth from the Muslim, Jewish, and Presbyterian faiths come together with an attitude of social responsibility that extends beyond the boundaries of their own religion and cultures. These youth have explored solutions to **equitable education**, one of the four IMAD [i.e. Illinois Muslim Action Day] issues this year; a social issue that remains a stark reality for many of them. …In a series of three meetings, the youth met at a synagogue, church and masjid where Leah Roth-Howe of the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs, and Reverend Jay Moses from the Presbyterian Church in Wheaton spoke to the teens about their own personal faith journeys and the active role religion plays in their life. The students started by creating posters depicting their own spiritual experiences and how they feel their faith defines them. Then they [began] tackling how they will speak to their [state/government] legislators.[2]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] **Interfaith Engagement Through the Council**. Website reporting; www.ciogc.org. Chicago: The Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago, 2009.

Another prime example of the utilization of interfaith dialogue within American Muslim institutions is the Freedom Foundation of MAS,[1] which is the civic and human rights advocacy arm of MAS, the largest Muslim, grassroots, charitable, religious, social, cultural, civic and educational organization in America - with 55 chapters in 35 states of the United States. In the recent newsletter sent to all chapters one reads as follows:

> **MAS Freedom calls for Interfaith support during Congressional Hearings**[2] As Salaam Alaikum! As we are sure that you already know, major congressional hearings on the subject of "Islamic Radicalism" have been scheduled for some time in March, 2011, by the new chair of the House of Representatives Homeland Security Committee, Rep. Peter King. Many of us in the leadership of national Muslim organizations have expressed grave concerns that both the substance and tone of these proposed hearings will be used by some anti-Muslim organizations and individuals to unfairly marginalize our community, while attacking our legitimate freedoms and civil liberties.[3]

Full letter can be found in Appendix B along with a joint letter for interfaith leadership to cosign on the subject of proposed House Homeland Security Committee hearings on "Islamic Radicalism" in the U.S.. Executive Director for MAS Freedom Foundation, Mahdi Bray[4] has

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[1] **The Muslim American Society**. 15 01 2011 <http://www.masnet.org>.
[2] See original email in Appendix B.
[3] Ramey, Ibrahim. **MAS Freedom Calls for Interfaith Support During Congressional Hearings**. Newsletter. http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?llr=qta9hbcab&v=001uhMSa17EQAc4M6UWHYy5caKv_NmsmR7P5kuDHT6DezWVLJRgd-Df6KL7VWwYZKsWmxNucZVYovVTUGBpPOQQDXifOPWjC2SjYO5ImCL0Mhu-c34uo5UOkGOfEkTu8GKYqr3aRecjQhc%3D: MAS Freedom Foundation, 2011.
[4] Imam Mahdi Bray is a long time civil and human rights activist currently serving as the Executive Director of the Muslim American Society's MAS Freedom (MASF) based in Washington, D.C. Bray also serves on the Board of Directors of the Interfaith Alliance, America's largest interfaith organization with over 150,000 members, the National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice and is a National Co-convener of Religions for Peace - USA, in addition to being a Washington, DC television and radio talk show host and former President of the Coordinating Council of Muslim Organizations (CCMO). Bray has appeared on CBS News, Fox Television, MSNBC, CNN, C-SPAN, Aljazeera and many TV and radio talk shows. He has served as a major consultant and a political advisor to Bonner & Associates, Washington's largest grassroots lobbying firm, the National

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said, "It is critical that the faith community work together to do all that we can to heal the heart and the land, ... This is the real prophetic mission of all faiths. We are truly encouraged by the solidarity and outpouring of support exhibited by those in the faith community."[1]/[2] One more example of the utilization of interfaith dialogue by the American Muslims and perhaps from one of the most profound and prolific is the example of CAIR.[3] Straight from the Interfaith page of CAIR's website:

> The Council on American-Islamic Relations works closely with interfaith communities around the country to help enhance understanding of Islam and help Muslims understand other faiths. Understanding and respecting each other's faiths is essential to living and working together peacefully. Toward this goal, CAIR officials regularly meet with interfaith leaders, speak at ecumenical events, and serve on boards of interfaith groups and organizations. CAIR representatives frequently attend events at churches, synagogues, and other houses of worship, and help mosques nationwide hold open houses to share understanding of their faith.[4]

Center for Housing Management, Alexandria City Redevelopment & Housing Authority, Community Relations Department, The City of Norfolk, Virginia, Department of Community Improvement, and the Independent Voter League. He has also served as Political Advisor and Strategist to several national, state, and local political campaigns.
Imam Bray was also an organizer for the "No War on Iraq" movement and has led peace missions in Bosnia, East Africa and Darfur. He has served as a liaison between the President's White House Faith-Based Initiative Program and congressional affairs on behalf of the Muslim Community. Imam Bray is also the author of The Mosque Voter's Guide and The Political Guide for Mosque Activists. http://www.masfreedom.org/about_us April, 2011.

[1] "**Mahdi Bray Quotes**."

[2] Note from researcher: 29/12/2010 Mahdi suffered from cerebral stroke, please make dua'a for him as he recovers and see http://www.masfreedom.org/masf_updates/imam_mahdi_bray April, 2011.

[3] CAIR Council on American Islamic Relations.

[4] CAIR. "**Interfaith**." CAIR Council on American-Islamic Relations. 28 03 2011 <http://www.cair.com/AmericanMuslims/Interfaith.aspx>.

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What is truly remarkable, especially for this research, is that among the headings for the page entitled **CAIR at a Glance**[1] such headlines include: **Founding, Offices, Media, Civil Rights** and **Active in America** etc. It describes the section, *Active in America*, in the following way:

> CAIR volunteers and board members come from all walks of American life; they include professors, doctors, teachers, lawyers, engineers, and entrepreneurs. CAIR officials and board members also serve on several non-profit boards such as the ACLU, NCCJ, NAACP, and ICIRR. They regularly participate in interfaith dialogue and are part of civic advocacy and human rights coalitions.[2]

Interfaith dialogue is seen as a primary function for advocacy groups at correcting the image of Islam in America, reducing tensions, developing proper perspective while breaking down stereotypes and is well needed to developing coalitions and efforts to battling the detrimental aspects of the propaganda of Islamophobia. Islamic da'wa is achieved through dialogue; without a doubt, the most powerful way that Allah's message is spread is through dialogue.

3.4 Why American Muslims must participate in Interfaith Dialogue

The involvement of American Muslims must increase and fortunately Islamically-oriented social change involves the least amount of friction.[3] Truth and trust are perhaps the greatest motivating factors for sustaining a connection in a pluralistic society; therefore Muslims must move from a state of mistrust to a state of trust. The false image of Islam and Muslims must change and the rhetoric of the propaganda machine known as Islamophobia must be combated effectively. Muslims in the West must become "Agents of Change".[4] The disparity between conceived notions of what is Islam and who are Muslims must be

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[1] "**CAIR at a glance**." CAIR Council for American-Islamic Relations. 28 03 2011 <http://www.cair.com/AboutUs/CAIRataGlance.aspx>.
[2] CAIR. "**Interfaith**."
[3] Parvez, Zahid. **Building a New Society An Islamic Approach to Social Change**. Leicestershire: Rivival Publications, 2000, page 9.
[4] Parvez, page 213.

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corrected. Unfortunately, the fear of Islam is such that the Islamic revival in Muslim populations around the globe has come to denote radicalism, anti-Westernism, and terrorism.[1] Regrettably, views like these have and are continuing to hamper the West's understanding of Islam as well as condition and promote hostile political responses.[2] Efforts need to be exerted to build bridges, and create understanding and trust between the various communities that make up the pluralistic society of the United States. American Muslims must dialogue at all levels. A word to the wise; it is a myth that Islam is looking to "convert" people(s) to Islam or to force *shari'a* laws. *"...Had Allah willed, He would have made you one nation [united in religion], but [He intended] to test you in what He has given you so race to [all that is] good..."(5:48)* and *"There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion..."(2:256)* are two clear verses of the Qur'an that denounce these notions.

3.5 What is Dialogue for American Muslims?

Dialogue is defined as the exchange of ideas or views on a particular issue for reaching an amicable agreement or settlement[3] and the ultimate goal is to build trust which can only be reached through real connections; an empirical method. Only then can the bulk of problems be identified; overcoming the poor image of Islam and Muslims in America must be a primary concern. Therefore, American Muslims, men and women, must be present, involved and genuine. They cannot afford to isolate themselves from the communities they share. They must show themselves as caring, family oriented and peaceful citizens of the communities in which they live, work, learn and grow. Especially American Muslims women must be present to bring down the walls[4] which have, in part, been self-imposed and demonstrate the proper and progressive image of the Muslim woman contrary to the stereotypical portrayal in Western media.

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[1] Parvez, page 5.
[2] Parvez, page 5.
[3] http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/dialogue retrieved May 14,2011.
[4] See section 1.1.6 Sohail Ghannouchi.

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3.6 Why American Muslim Women Must Participate in Interfaith Dialogue!

Most Americans cannot refute the long line of influential women in the American story because most Americans are well aware of the vital contributions that women have had in the social, economic, political, educational, cultural, faith-based, civil aspects of community life. Women have helped shape the society of the United States from before its inception. Remarkable women, like the Native American woman, Sacagawea, as she was the field guide to white settlers in the vast wildernesses of North America; to Sojourner Truth, fighting to end slavery and bringing equal rights to all of America's citizens; to Rosalyn Yalow, Nobel Prize in Medicine for developing new techniques in measuring substances in the blood; to Anne Marbury Hutchinson, known for her influence in shaping the First Amendment to the U.S. constitution: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." The inscription at the base of a raised statue in her honor reads, "Courageous Exponent of Civil Liberty and Religious Toleration".[1]

These women mentioned above and dozens upon dozens of others like them; including the likes of Rosa Parks, "believed that they had a contribution to make and they did not shrink from the obstacles in their way."[2] In the infamous words of Harriet Beecher Stowe, "Women are the real architects of society." This researcher asks: Why, then, are American Muslim women hiding in the margins of American society? While they have a paved road in front of them to light their way not only here in America but as did their Muslim women predecessors from the time of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh); the likes of Khadija, Aisha, Um Salama, Asma bint Abi Bakr (ra) and many more. Is there truth to the Muslim woman

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[1] Betka, Mark, et al. "**About America: Women of Influence**." Bureau of International Information Programs. 2006, page 6.

[2] Betka, page 1.

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stereotype? Countless papers and researches have been written, without a doubt, affirming the emancipation or liberation Islam has given the Muslim woman. That is not what this research is about; but it must address this social phenomenon. So if it isn't Islam, what is contributing to this stereotype? Chapter Four addresses this issue from the voices of "*the other*" otherwise referred to as invested dialogue partners. Just perhaps we can understand why these typecasts are perceived and augment as realities in the eyes of many Americans. Can American Muslims afford to just write it off as ignorance, propaganda or is there some validity to these labels?

3.7 Pluralism and Interfaith Dialogue

Diversity is nothing more than plurality; a number greater than one; a large number; a multitude, and **pluralism** is "the engagement" among the diversity. For example, "on the same street in Silver Spring, Maryland the Vietnamese Catholic church, the Cambodian Buddhist temple, the Ukranian Orthodox church, the Muslim Community Center, the Disciples of Christ church and the Mandir Hindu temple are all located in the same neighborhood. This is currently diversity [;plurality], but without engagement or relationship with one another it may not be an instance of pluralism."[1]

Some people actually feel threatened by pluralism and may be even hostile toward it. This hostility may be seen in Islamophobia.[2] For some, America is a *melting pot*[3] and takes on an extreme undertone; that every ethnicity, every culture and every religion should blend, or melt, together to make everyone the same. Social pressure to conform can be quite strong. I recall a conversation with a complete stranger at a gas station once back in the '80's. Wherein, this person, completely unknown to me, was bent on telling me that I am in

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[1] Eck, Diana L. **From Diversity to Pluralism.** 2006. March 2011 <http://pluralism.org/pluralism/essays/from_diversity_to_pluralism.php>.
[2] See section 1.2 Islamophobia.
[3] **"'Melting Pot' America**." 12 05 2006. BBC News One-Minute World News. 01 04 2011 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/4931534.stm>.

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America *now* and I have to dress like an American; this person totally unaware that I am an indigenous American Muslim. This particular person did not like my *hijab* or my *jilbab*. Of course, I couldn't feel as if I was "engaged" in this conversation because this person was making me feel like I didn't belong unless I changed. I, too, can clearly hear the phrase, "This is a Christian country!" ringing in my ears from how many times it has been expressed to me. Obviously, "the pluralism that would engage people of different faiths and cultures in the creation of a common society is not a "given", but an achievement."[1]

Three perspectives to looking at the historical record of American's diversity can be seen. One; exclusion, two; assimilation, and three; pluralism as described above. For the "exclusionists" it is simply to close the door to immigration. I can no longer count the times someone has shouted at me from afar, "Go home!" followed by some negative and vulgar epithet descriptive of my supposed "Arab" origins. For the assimilationists, the melting pot example suffices; "You're welcome but check your differences at the door." And finally for the pluralists; "Pledge only to the common civic demands of American citizenship."[2]

American Muslims are, more than sometimes, victims of old and new forms or prejudice and bias. These sometime hostile encounters over "zoning" and "traffic" for example, may be less about these legitimate concerns as they are more of an expression of the fear and uncertainty of the *new-comer* to down-right refusal to live side by side. See Appendix N –Banning Mosques for media coverage of pending mosque approval and debates in DuPage County, Ground Zero Mosque and Palos Heights, IL.

However, "America's religious diversity has produced a new period of bridge building."[3] For the first time America is seeing unprecedented relationships forming.

[1] Eck.
[2] Eck.
[3] Ibid.

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Interfaith alliances are coming up all over the country.[1] One argument of this thesis is that as these relationships are being made more often than not, with the Muslim; or the mosque; or the Islamic Center as the "*invitee*" or sometimes, simply the token participant. It really takes the unusual Muslim or Islamic institute; organization or center to build real partnerships and forge real community achievement. Therefore, not only does this thesis make the argument for American Muslims to increase interfaith dialogue participation but that it initiate; "set the table"; develop the institutions that construct, support and champion these relationship formations that "constitute a new interreligious infrastructure"[2] of the religious fabric of America. Currently, we see "interfaith dialogues [and] interfaith coalitions fighting hunger and homelessness in America".[3] Mentioned in Chapter Two: *Women*, the Million Mom March on Washington DC for Gun Control is one such exemplary example of the interfaith coalitions currently being practiced. Immigration and refugee rights issues have more often than not been causes of many a church or religious institution and are forming coalitions all over the country.[4]

Another aspect as to why American Muslims must engage in the American society through interfaith dialogue is the religious literacy it promotes. As a high school Islamic Studies teacher in the '90's through 2003, I recall coming across a program our school was invited to participate in; Teaching Tolerance.[5] A program designed to address the issues of diversity that our community[6] was facing at that time. As I considered implementing its campaign I can recall thinking, "As a Muslim or as a human, I don't want to be tolerated!? I want affirmation!" Should I expect to teach this deficient attitude to my Junior and Senior

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[1] The Interfaith Alliance and The Interfaith Alliance Foundation the national non-partisan advocacy voice of the interfaith movement. http://www.interfaithalliance.org/ .
[2] Eck.
[3] Ibid.
[4] ICIRR is dedicated to promoting the rights of immigrants and refugees to full and equal participation in the civic, cultural, social, and political life of our diverse society. http://icirr.org/ .
[5] http://www.tolerance.org/ .
[6] Southwestern suburb of Chicago, which is billed as one of the most segregated cities in America www.democraticunderground.com Friday August 15, 2003. Retrieved 25/03/11.

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Islamic Studies students? Wherever diverse communities exist, the shaping of its social atmosphere can be highly segregated or "blended" in varying degrees of segregation which leaves little or restricted room for getting to know "the other". It is this "unknown" factor that creates misjudgments and worse creates fear; fear leads to mistrust; mistrust creates tension.[1]

Therefore, pluralism is more than toleration. Although tolerance is an important factor, it does not require people to know anything about "the other" and hence all the stereotype and ill-feelings based on half-truths can harbor and fester and do little to engage for the well-being of a community.

Even today, there are suspicious eyes on what it means to engage in a pluralistic society. Some falsely feel it waters-down all religion, or it assumes no differences in religions. Quite to the contrary, pluralism does not require the removal of the distinctiveness of religions; it promotes the "acknowledging rather than hiding [or merging] the differences."[2] In America, it seems so fundamental; pluralism. The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States: "no establishment" of religion and the "free exercise" of religion seems to rely on the premise that this American society not be in agreement in matters of faith nor that any one citizen be prevented from freely following any religion. E Pluribus Unum: "out of many; one".[3] Unum does not mean conformity. "Perhaps the most valuable thing people of many faiths have in common is their commitment to a society based on the 'give and take' of civil dialogue at a common table."[4]

As many places in this thesis; either in the defining of interfaith dialogue or in the promotion of the idea or along with the encouragement of new and improved methods or in the increasing participation of American Muslims women; the nature of constructive dialogue

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[1] Winters, Jeffrey. "**Why we fear the unknown**." 14 07 2009. Psychology Today. 05 01 2011 <http://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200305/why-we-fear-the-unknown>.
[2] Eck.
[3] See section 1.1.2 for the Founding Fathers intention to include Muslims and Islam .
[4] Eck.

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relies on the common understandings and the recognition of real differences. Not everyone will come to the "table" in agreement but that the exchange of ideas or opinions will aim to reach an amicable, harmonious mutual understanding. Much will depend on the willingness of the participants to break-down the stereotypes and develop new and correct perspectives of each other as individual community members or citizens but also of "the other's" religion and/or ethnic background as well.

There is a somewhat interesting negative attitude toward interfaith dialogue, and yet somewhat relevant as well. It is what was conveyed to this researcher during a private interview with Dr. Aminah McCloud,[1] Author and Professor of Islamic World Studies and Islamic Ethics at DePaul University in Chicago. Dr. Aminah McCloud,[2] "one of the very first scholars to examine African American women converts [to Islam],"[3] accepted my request to interview her for the purposes of this thesis regarding the Evaluation of the American Muslim *Da'wa* Effort. She invited me to her home in Chicago at 12:30pm January 14, 2011, and we discussed the main issues surrounding my thesis. Dr. McCloud offered many insights as well as completed the survey regarding the Main Obstacles of Women in Interfaith Dialogue. Although, her responses to the survey have not been included in the analysis[4] because the survey had already been analyzed by this time, I will, however, allude to her responses as an invaluable and authoritative source in addressing the issues surrounding the survey.

From the onset of our conversation, Dr. McCloud was resolute in expressing her opinion that she does not necessarily back the current state of affairs on the interfaith dialogue scene.

She believes that it is in need of a "re-hauling" of its objectives and purposes; to which this

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[1] **McCloud, Aminah. Interview**. Karen Pearl Danielson. 14 01 2011.
[2] http://condor.depaul.edu/amccloud/ .
[3] Haddad, page 45.
[4] Chapter Four: The Survey Analyzed.

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researcher agrees but feels this is a task well in progress. She expressed the importance of realizing the origins of interfaith dialogue, which she explains, lie in the Catholic Church and their own modifications which arose from Vatican II. The origins in America, as she explained began between American Jews and Catholics post WWII in the '60's as a response to the document *Nostra Aetate.* This dialogue began with addressing anti-Semitic biblical exhortations that had not been excised from the Church's liturgy and henceforth remained within the Catholic psyche. It had little to do with the dialogue descriptions as found in Chapter Three of this thesis.

Immigrant Muslim communities, Dr. McCloud continued, came on the scene of interfaith dialogue in America, seemingly to defend Islam or to preach it.[1] Finally, it seems that they [Catholics and Muslims] settled in to a pattern of dialogue that was compromising Islam's uniqueness and Islam's main precepts or principles which were somehow subsumed under a limited listing of commonalities. Concessions had to be made, on the part of Muslims and Islam, and the issues of concern became directed, or orchestrated, I think the term she used, by "the other". She also described it as "Muslims being invited to a table they did not get to set," and that the Muslims had to accept whatever was on the agenda of the Catholics. This research highlights the "unpreparedness" of the American Muslim community in Chapter Three, section 3.2, Dialogue Development in the American Muslim Community.

Dr. McCloud opines that the African American and African American Muslim communities do not feel that interfaith dialogue is relevant. Not only do the issues of importance, such as the plight of the African American male, which strikes a number of social issues, poverty, education, and discrimination, all together exemplify a stark difference to the issues of importance to the immigrant Muslim communities, such as foreign affairs and foreign policies of whichever current administration is employing; but it just seems strange to

[1] See section 3.2 Dialogue Development in the American Muslim Community.

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debate at a table that was not set for Muslims but was set, rather, to affirm their own Christianity or Catholicism. Immigrant communities seem to have their eyes constantly looking overseas or back home. Unfortunately, this often times, leaves little to no relationship between the two; the African American Muslim and Immigrant Muslim communities; an intra-faith issue barely touching on the horizon of American Muslim dilemma.

Dr. McCloud also believes that it i.e. interfaith dialogue has not been a dialogue of equals, and in some ways she is absolutely right.[1] She supports her view; the impracticality of interfaith dialogue, by indicating that those individuals who want to know about Islam will find out through other venues. She recommends American Muslims leave interfaith dialogue except "as much as it is an issue of social well-being."[2] Furthermore, as noted above, Dr. McCloud believes that the American Muslim community would service themselves better if they afforded the effort of intra-faith dialogue to begin bridging the gaps between the various immigrant Muslim communities, indigenous Muslim communities and the various theological or ideological differences found in the American Muslim communities.

3.8 Women in Dialogue: Trials and Triumphs

Nearly every author of interfaith dialogue produces a "list" either 'differing types of' or 'various areas of' or a '*do's and don'ts'* list. Some lists can be subsumed into other lists and some are so exclusive they only fit one kind of dialogue e.g. the structure of a dialogue of academics will not resemble the structure of a grassroots dialogue. However, all are relevant for developing methodology and form. For practical purposes the following are four forms of recognized interfaith dialogue:[3]

a. *The dialogue of life*: of daily contact in family, social, educational or work life.

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[1] See section 3.2 "However, in the early '70's one could hardly find a Muslim scholar of theology specializing in Christianity or Judaism but the West was living in its "hay-day" of Orientalism".
[2] **McCloud, Aminah. Interview**. Karen Pearl Danielson. 14 01 2011.
[3] **WATAC Women of the Australian Church**. 08 05 2009 <http://www.watac.net/>.

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b. *The dialogue of deeds*: of working in joint projects for human development, to deal with social issues e.g. healthcare, education, poverty, etc.

c. *The dialogue of religious experience*: of prayer, contemplation, and faith.

d. *The dialogue of specialists*: i.e. at the lead; religious leadership

It is in the first two forms of dialogue that women are often found but rarely are there any written reports or documentations of these interactions. It is the opinion of this researcher that it is this form of dialogue that reaches deep into the community and plays the most important role of breaking down divides and sowing the seeds of grassroots movements for community well-being; cooperative and collaborative activity. As a matter of course, women have been found participating in dialogues without even knowing so and when they are formalized their voices are just whispers in recognized dialogue circles. It is a phenomenon that crosses multi-cultural and multi-religious communities. The inability if the institutional Church to listen to women's voices was prominent in the 1999 Bishops' Report on women in the Australian Catholic Church. A group of women from Melbourne stated:

> We believe there are few forums within the official Church for women's voices to be heard. Women are not always accepted in Church circles and they are dealt with in patronizing ways. There is often an inability by those in authority to listen to women's pastoral experience and vision.[1]

Similar situations are experienced among American Muslim communities, and even the world over, for there are few if any traditionally recognized authorities of women in interfaith dialogue, while men's authoritative voice on interfaith dialogue reaches the Vatican and Al-Azhar University in Cairo. The Catholic-Muslim Dialogue Day was established in 2000 by the Vatican-Muslim Committee, a joint venture by the Pontifical Council for

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[1] Research Management Group ***Woman and man: one in Christ Jesus: Report on the participation of women in the Catholic Church in Australia*** Harper Collins Religious, Sydney, NSW, 1999, page 86. http://awap-v.esrc.unimelb.edu.au/scripts/lib/bib.php?pubid=AWP002643 retrieved May 8, 2009.

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Interreligious Dialogue and the Permanent Committee of al-Azhar for Dialogue with Monotheistic religions. The request to increase women's involvement, surprisingly, does not only come from within the walls of Muslim communities but from other faith communities as well. To expound on the obstacles a little further here is an example from a group of women in South Australia:

> This response has as a basic underlying principle: the belief that women must be involved in all facets and levels of the Church… Consequently, the Church must find ways for women to be involved in all areas of the Church, at all levels and especially in the areas of significant decision-making and direction-setting for the Church. This must occur locally at parish and diocesan level and nationally... There are many significant areas where the Australian Church can be at the 'cutting edge' of developments for women.[1]

At the World Council of Churches in Harare, Zimbabwe in which women were well in attendance, Ursula King, in speaking at the Irish School of Ecumenism in l995 said in addressing the issue of women, "they are ***'the missing dimension'*** in the dialogue of religions." The World meeting at Assisi[2] she asks, "Can these religious leaders of today still legitimately 'voice' the concerns of women and speak on their behalf, as if women would not speak for themselves?"[3]/[4] Moreover, visual documentation of interfaith dialogue lacks a women's representation, a simple google of interfaith dialogue images validates this claim. Regarding Muslim organized interfaith dialogue, for example, at the 6th annual Doha

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[1] Research Management Group ***Woman and man: one in Christ Jesus: Report on the participation of women in the Catholic Church in Australia*** Harper Collins Religious, Sydney, NSW, 1999, page 86. http://awap-v.esrc.unimelb.edu.au/scripts/lib/bib.php?pubid=AWP002643 retrieved May 8, 2009.
[2] Interreligious Meeting in Assisi, Italy January 24, 2002. http://www.sspx.org/miscellaneous/what_should_we_make_of_assisi.htm retrieved May 8, 2009.
[3] **WATAC Women of the Australian Church.**
[4] ***Women and Interfaith Dialogue*** Women and the Australian Church, http://www.watac.net/ retrieved May 8, 2009.

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Conference of Interfaith Dialogue 2008,[1] an international event, a mere 20 women participants attended from 155 registered participants and more than half of those were women accompanying their spouses.[2] From the 2-day program, there was one Muslim woman moderating a session and one non-Muslim woman speaking at one session of 12 sessions with nearly 50 speakers (50:1). An interesting note as well, to which I will leave the reader to consider, the Muslim woman who was moderating one session; Prof. Aisha Yousef Al-Mannai , Dean College of Sharia and Islamic Studies was more than qualified to present.[3] Dr. Jeffery Lang poignantly stated in his book, Loosing My Religion, regarding the status of women in Islamic communities, "This propensity to bow to the most conservative view is particularly evident in the treatment of women in the American Islamic community."[4] And he continues later with some clarification, "Muslim women are debarred from positions of leadership in many communities, and rarely are women included on boards of directors or executive committees."[5]

Without doubt, the involvement of women in interfaith dialogue is required and necessary. Sadly, however, much work and needed change must take place before women are accorded equal space and full justice in religious influence and/or authority.

> The great invisibility, marginality and voicelessness in world religions are paralleled by the marginality and voicelessness of women in interreligious dialogue. If more women became more prominent and visible in such dialogue, this in turn might help to transform the oppressive patriarchal structures of religions and produce more compelling, more just and inclusive, but also more gender aware religious works

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[1] **6th Doha Conference of Inter-Faith Dialogue**. 13 05 2009. o8 05 2009 <http://www.qatar-conferences.org/dialogue2008/english/index.php>.
[2] "**Participant Information Brief**." 13 05 2008. 6th Doha Conference of Inter-Faith Dialogue. 08 05 2009 <http://www.qatar-conferences.org/dialogue2008/english/English.pdf>.
[3] "**Agenda**." 13 05 2008. 6th Doha Conference of Inter-Faith Dialogue. 08 05 2009 <http://www.qatar-conferences.org/dialogue2008/english/program.php>.
[4] Lang, page 7.
[5] Ibid.

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which would be more life-sustaining and life-enhancing for all peoples and the earth.[1]/[2]

3.9 Muslim Women Preachers

Three years ago, AlJazeera English aired a program called, *Moroccan Woman Preachers*, on a series called *Everywoman,* on December 2, 2007.[3] The presenter began the show drawing a comparative religious analogy to the female Buddhist monks in Thailand, the recently ordained female priests in the Church of England and female rabbis in all but Orthodox Judaism. With what regard to Islam is a woman's role? Not only does an *imam* in Islam lead congregational prayer and deliver the sermon, the *imam* also serves as a spiritual leader and religious authority. So the question is, can and should this additional role be played by a woman as well? The majority of scholars, amid few controversial voices, agree that women cannot lead congregational prayers of men and women nor deliver the Friday or *Eid khutba* i.e. holiday sermon, far removed from the likes of Amina Wadud[4] which "some observers believe that Nomani, Wadud, and their colleagues may have nudged the lid off Pandora's box and more such efforts will follow."[5]

Until recently, Muslim women have seldom played institutional leadership roles in mosques. But mosques take on differing roles in the West and in America. They are not strictly for prayer or the occasional Qur'an and religion class as the traditional mosque is seen in the East, for example. "American mosques …are often the locus of social occasions and other "seasonal" activities… [they] function in ways that are more like churches and

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[1] **WATAC Women of the Australian Church**. 08 05 2009 <http://www.watac.net/>.
[2] King, Ursula Women and the Australian Church, *Women and Interfaith Dialogue.*
[3] Al-Jazeera English. "**Everywoman-Moroccan Women Preachers Part 1**." Muxlim. 23 03 2011 <http://muxlim.com/videos/AlJazeeraEng/everywoman-moroccan-female-preachers-part-1/>.
[4] Amina Wadud, African American Muslim scholar-activist of Virginia Commonwealth University, who is of the opinion and advocates for women to have the right to lead both men and women in prayer.
[5] Haddad, page 65.

synagogues than mosques abroad."[1] Furthermore, mosques in America take a deeper role in education than they do currently in the east, often times housing full time schools and a regular full program of lectures and training for all community members. While Muslims do not formally ordain religious leaders, the *imam* does serve as a spiritual leader and religious authority. Is it possible for women to also take on this role?

Returning to the program, *Moroccan Women Preachers*, the current curriculum being instituted in Morocco or similar ones in Egypt do not advocate "women *imams*"; leading prayers and delivering *khutbas*, they do, however, advocate women to do just about everything else an imam would do as the authority of a mosque i.e. administrative tasks, hospital and prison visitations, etc. The most notable accomplishment here; that women are given authority of not only "preaching" Islam but at initiating programs to guide and direct Muslims in daily life.

The Moroccan Ministry of Islamic Affairs, as the program states, has begun appointing "female guides" or "*murshidat*" to encourage a more tolerant Islam after the 2003 bombing in Casa Blanca.

Religious preacher, Samira Marzouk, a 30 yr old Moroccan woman, who recently graduated from the training program e.g. the same program that the male imams must complete before qualifying as imams, speaks that this kind of program is not just for Morocco but for the entire Muslim world. "[unclear] was a need felt everywhere that there is a growing attitude that the Islam practiced is getting more and more extreme and there is a need to re-address the situation in one way or another."[2/3] said Ahmed Koutas, Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Moracco. "These female preachers want to use their own vision of religion not the male vision." said Dr. Fatimah Sadiqi, University of Fez, interviewed in the program. "Males

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[1] Haddad, page 63.
[2] Al-Jazeera English.
[3] Thesis researcher has transcribed all quotes from program, *Moroccan Women Preachers*.

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think of the veil as a token of obedience. And females think of it as empowering." In which the presenter, of *Everywoman*, states next, "a female vision, then, in an attempt to combat extremist ideology and violence." Furthermore, states Amina Dad, a trainee in the Moroccan program, "Now is [a] bad time for Islam because people think of Islam in a bad/narrow way and we have forgotten how Islam is a religion of tolerance and we've also forgotten how to look at the roles and laws of our religion in a positive way; as a positive part of our daily lives." Because of a fatwa issued by Morocco's leading cleric, the *murshidat* will not lead prayers and neither has this been an issue, "but those Murshidat play a role far more important than the *imam* or prayer leader" says Ahmed Koutas

"Men have their way and women have their way," adds Amira Dad. The program concludes that early signs that the decision to allow women to preach has been a successful [decision] and other countries have shown interest as well.

The BBC ran a similar story entitled, *Muslim Women Preachers,* from their One Minute World News,[1] in which it informs that two years of study are required to obtain the necessary license. Magda Amir, the BBC program highlights, preaches in one of Cairo's leading mosques and "she is part of an emerging trend of female Muslim preachers in Egypt."[2]

3.10 Men and Women In Islam: Cooperative Roles and More

- *"And [We] did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship [Me]." (51:56)*

Tafhim al-Qur'an, Sayyid AbulA'la Mawdudi,[3] states that is,

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[1] "BBCNews One-Minute World News."**In Pictures: Muslim Women Preachers**. 23 03 2011. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/picture_gallery/06/middle_east_muslim_women_preachers/html/1.stm>.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Mawdudi, Sayyid Abul A'la. **Towards Understanding the Qur'an**. Trans. Zafar Ishaq Ansari. Vol. I. Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1988.

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"[Allah has] not created them for the service of others but for [His] service. They should serve [Him], for [He is] their Creator. When no one else has created them, no one else has the right that they should serve [those]; and how can it be admissible for them that they should serve others instead of [Allah], their Creator?"

- *"Then did you think that [We] created you uselessly and that to [Us] you would not be returned?" (23:115)*

Tafsir Ibn Kathir[1] states the meaning to be "did you think that you were created in vain with no purpose, with nothing required of you and no wisdom on [Allah's] part?"[2]

- *"And thus [We] have made you a median [i.e. just] community that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you…" (2:143)*

Tafhim al-Qur'an, Sayyid AbulA'la Mawdudi,[3] explains the meaning of *"and thus we have made you a median [i.e. just] community…"*

"as the community of the middle way…It signifies that distinguished group of people which follows the path of justice and equity, of balance and moderation, a group which occupies a central position among the nations of the world so that its friendship with all is based on righteousness and justice and none receives its support in wrong and injustice…to make it stand as witness…on behalf of the Prophet…amounts to it being invested with the leadership of mankind".

- *"You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah. If*

[1] Mujahid, Abdul Malik, ed. **Tafsir Ibn Kathir**. Trans. Shaykh Safiur-Rahman Al-Mubarakpuri. First. Abridged. Riyadh: Darussalam, 2000. 10 vols.
[2] Vol. 6, page 701.
[3] Mawdudi, pages 120-121.

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only the People of the Scripture had believed, it would have been better for them. Among them are believers, but most of them are defiantly disobedient." (3:110)

Tafhim al-Qur'an, Sayyid AbulA'la Mawdudi,[1] explains the meaning of *"You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind,"* "the same declaration that was made earlier (2:143)…they are being assigned the guidance and leadership…and [to] avoid the mistakes committed by their predecessors."

- *"Indeed, the Muslim men and women, the believing men and believing women, the obedient men and obedient women, the truthful men and truthful women, the patient men and patient women, the humble men and humble women, the charitable men and charitable women, the fasting men and fasting women, the men who guard their private parts and the women who do so, and the men who remember Allah often and the women who do so – for them Allah ahs prepared forgiveness and a great reward." (33:35)*

Tafsir Ibn Kathir[2] states,

> "Imam Ahmad recorded that Umm Salamah (ra), the wife of the Prophet (pbuh), said 'Why is it that we are not mentioned in the Qur'an as men are?' Then one day without my realizing it, he was calling from the *Minbar* and I was combing my hair, so I tied my hair back then I went out to my chamber in my house, and I started listening out, and he was saying from the *minbar* [ayah 33:35]."[3]

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[1] Mawdudi, page 278.
[2] Mujahid, Abdul Malik, ed. **Tafsir Ibn Kathir**.
[3] Vol. 7, page 685.

- *"And strive for Allah with the striving due to Him. He has chosen you and has not placed upon you in the religion any difficulty. [It is] the religion of your father, Abraham. He [i.e. Allah] named you Muslim before [in former scriptures] and in this [revelation] that the Messenger may be a witness over you and you may be witnesses over the people. So establish prayer and give zakah and hold fast to Allah. He is your protector; and excellent is the protector and excellent is the helper." (22:78)*

Again and again the parallel of Abraham (pbuh) is used, *"Indeed, Abraham was a [comprehensive] leader…" (16:120)* commentary in the translation of this verse in Saheeh International i.e. embodying all the excellent qualities which make one an example to be followed and elucidating to the reciprocation of communication.

- *"And let there be [arising] from you a nation inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be the successful." (3:104)*

Tafsir Ibn Kathir[1] explains this ayah "…a segment of the Muslim *Ummah* to fulfilling this task, even though it is also an obligation on every member", page 233, and makes reference as a prohibition toward the division of the Muslim *Ummah*. [2]

- *"Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and [reason] with them in a way that is best…" (16:125)*

Tafsir Ibn Kathir[3] explains "…with kindness, gentleness and good speech…"[4]

- *"And We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], the Book [i.e. the Qur'an] in truth, confirming that which preceded it of the Scripture*

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[1] Mujahid, Abdul Malik, ed. **Tafsir Ibn Kathir**.
[2] Vol. 2, page 234.
[3] Mujahid, Abdul Malik, ed. **Tafsir Ibn Kathir**.
[4] Vol. 5, page 545.

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and as a criterion over it. So judge between them by what Allah has revealed and do not follow their inclinations away from what has come to you of the truth. To each of you We prescribed a law and a method. Had Allah willed, He would have made you one nation [united in religion], but [He intended] to test you in what He has given you; so race to [all that is] good. To Allah is your return all together, and He will [then] inform you concerning that over which you used to differ." (5:48)

Tafhim al-Qur'an, Sayyid AbulA'la Mawdudi[1] explains,

> "No doubt Allah could have prescribed one and the same Law for all human beings from the very beginning and made them a single community but He did not do so for many good reasons. One of these reasons is to test people whether they obey or not what is given to them by Allah... As the real object of all the laws is the cultivation of virtues, Allah has commanded the people to excel one another in virtues, without paying heed to the apparent differences in different Laws."

After reading the *ayat* above, one can begin to get an understanding as to what is their own personal role, male or female, in this life. These *ayat* make no distinctions in gender, in fact it appears that Allah (swt) is partnering and equating men and women not only in a spiritual sense but on all levels of society. We read that we are to be responsible; taking Allah's message seriously, not only to worship; but to serve and lead through service, and we should disperse in the earth; to witness to all of mankind. Women cannot witness to mankind if she is relegated to the interiors. As stated it is a responsible and accountable cooperation. Muslim men and women are obligated to invite, inform and educate. Muslims should remain

[1] Mawdudi. http://www.englishtafsir.com/ .

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in the middle path and take the responsibility with sincerity and wisdom. Finally, Believers are being asked to cooperate not only amongst themselves but with all of mankind.

When I first converted to Islam, I can remember a feeling of sitting at the edge of my seat, waiting to do something. This feeling was instigated though my reading of Qur'an; a reading that took place privately for nearly two years before I became part of a Muslim learned community. This feeling made me think I could do anything, everything, something! I cannot attribute this sense to anything other than a *fitra* and an unhampered reading of the meaning of the Qur'an. *SubhannaAllah*.

I have had the personal opportunity to discuss the role of women in society with Dr. Dua'a Fino, researcher extraordinaire, specializing in prophetic traditions and women in Islamic discourse.

> We have many examples in Islamic history to indicate that women occupied authoritative positions in society without limit or relative to gender. Aisha (ra) the Prophet's wife (pbuh) was a prominent authority on hadith; approximately 1/3rd of prophetic tradition is related through her. She clearly understood that there is no limit to women's participation in society even in combat.[1]

She asked me to refer to the battle of Muraysi and the battle of the Trench. "Also, we have the example of Um Salama (ra) whose role was that of a political advisor at the time of the Treaty of *Hudaibiyya*."[2] Dr. Dua'a Fino brought to my attention three books that are full of examples of women having a role in society including political roles as well. Mohammad Al-Ghazali's book, *Qazaya Al-Mar'ah Bayn Al-Taqalid Al-Rakidah wa Al-Wafiddah,*[3] which refers to the acceptance of women in high social roles including judiciary and ministerial from a pre-Islamic period through to the 9th century Hijra. Other authors are, Hibah Ra'uf

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[1] **Fino, Dua'a. Interview**. Karen Danielson. Amman, 5 April 2011.
[2] Fino.
[3] Al-Ghazali, Mohammad. **Qazaya Al-Mar'ah Bayn Al-Taqalid Al-Rakidah Wa Al-Wafiddah**. Cairo: Dar Al-Shuruq, 1991.

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'Izat's, *Al-Mar'ah wa Al-Amal al-Siyasi*,[1] and Asma' Mohammad Ziadeh, which is following strict hadith sciences, provides many evidences in her book, *Dor Al-Mar'ah Al-Siyasi*.[2]

Islam: The Empowering of Women, asks the question, "throughout the centuries of Islamic history, we find lots and lots of women active in all areas of life, and then suddenly it stops. What happened?"[3] Interestingly enough, is author, Aisha Bewley's statement in the *Preface,*

> For years people have been asking me to write or speak on 'the role of women in Islam'. I have always inwardly groaned at the prospect since it has always seemed perfectly obvious that the proper title should be 'the role of the human being in Islam' – how to become a whole, vibrant human being, worshipping our Creator…. More important than a male/female dichotomy is the 'abd/rabb dichotomy: the slave and the Lord.[4]

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[1] 'Izat, Hibah Ra'uf. **Al-Mar'ah wa Al-Amal al-Siyasi**. Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1995.
[2] Ziadeh, Asma' Mohammad. **Dor Al-Mar'ah al-Siyasi.** n.d.
[3] Bewley, backcover.
[4] Bewley, page 1.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Main Obstacles of Women in Interfaith Dialogue[1]

4.1 The Survey

A survey[2] was sent via e-mails exclusively to nearly two dozen women of various faiths that this researcher is personally aware of their commitment and dedication to interfaith dialogue, and in turn each woman was asked to share this survey with at least two other women and those women were also in turn asked to share the survey only with those they knew to be actively involved in interfaith dialogue as well. This method ensured that the survey would be answered only by women who have a vested interest and have participated in interfaith dialogue however it did not ensure as large of a response group as this researcher would have liked.

The survey promised anonymity for each respondent. Fourteen respondents completed the survey as of the first of May, 2009 and will be from here on out referred to by number; Respondent #1, Respondent #2 and so forth to Respondent #14. The complete responses of the women of various faiths; two from the Presbyterian Christian faith, five from the Islamic faith, five from the Roman Catholic/Catholic faith, and two from the Jewish faith, are all included in Appendix X. All the references made in this thesis from the responses of the women can be found directly in Appendix X. The respondents are all from the Midwest region of the United States. Their participation in interfaith dialogue has been between three years to thirty years of activity. It is for this reason this researcher feels that every respondent is truly a vested interlocutor. All but one respondent is currently involved in one or more interfaith dialogue(s). Five respondents are 60 years old or older, three in the 51-60 year range, one is in the 41-50 year range, two are in the 31-40 year old range and three

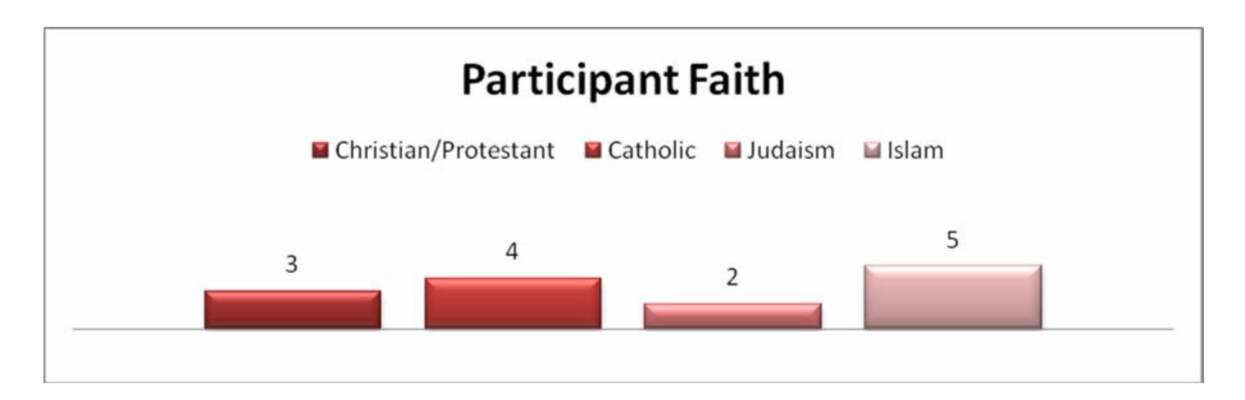
[1] Appendix X: The Survey.
[2] Found in Appendix X.

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respondents did not indicate their age.

Main Obstacles of Women in Interfaith Dialogue Survey

Table 1



Besides faith, age, region and years of participation in interfaith dialogue the women were asked what they thought were their primary and secondary personal obstacles of participating in interfaith dialogue. Furthermore, they were asked about what they thought is a primary obstacle for Muslim women to participate in interfaith dialogue. A note was made that if they were, themselves, Muslim than their response to this last question could differ from their own primary or secondary personal obstacles. This was to ensure that personal responses could be ascertained separately but also the observed obstacles could be registered in a general manner as well.

Finally, the women were asked to leave comment regarding the main obstacles women face in interfaith dialogue just to determine if there were tertiary or additional obstacles.

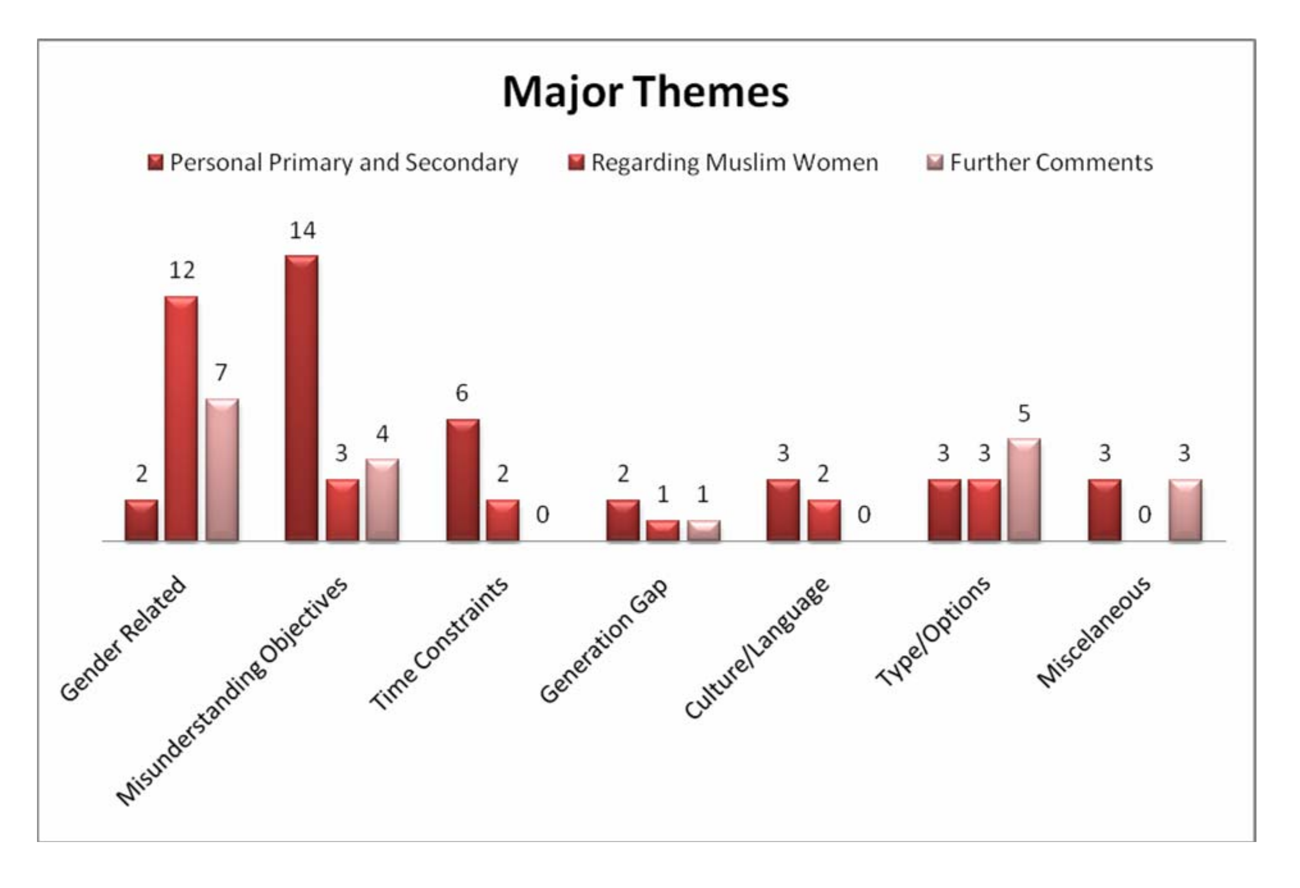
4.2 The Common Themes and Obstacles to Interfaith Dialogue

Six common themes were determined from the responses as to what are the obstacles of Muslim women in interfaith dialogue but also to some extent women in general, indicating that in some ways, at least, American Muslim women are not so different than their female interfaith counterparts.

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Main Obstacles of Women in Interfaith Dialogue Survey

Table 2



Gender issues were mentioned twenty-one times i.e. some respondents cited this issue more than once either as primary and secondary, or related to Muslim Women specifically, or a desire to make a further comment on the subject; ranked as the highest obstacle women face and these responses were nearly exclusively regarding Muslim women. Issues regarding the understanding of the objectives of interfaith dialogue ranked the same as gender issue related, also being mentioned twenty-one times. What is interesting to note is then in general all participants feel less at ease with understanding the objective but when it relates to gender, the general opinion is regarding Muslim women. The generation gap was mentioned five times, time constraints eight times and the methodology or limited nature of activity was mentioned eleven times. Language and cultural barriers specifically were mentioned five

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times together as they can be seen as indirectly implied in various responses.

4.2.1 Gender Issues as an Obstacle

The issue of gender came up so many times specifically regarding Muslim women that it behooves Muslim women and men, for that matter, to really consider seriously these perceptions. Please keep in mind these are not perceptions that are second-hand from hearsay or from the media but from direct meeting and dialogue in which Muslims have had the opportunity to freely express themselves. Or not, as respondent #1, a prominent member of the Presbyterian denomination was very clear in describing why she believes the voices of the Muslim women participants in dialogue were stifled by the Muslim men who were present. She was not alone in her opinion, either, as some of the other non-Muslim respondents have expressed as well. She says,

> Muslim women who have come to our dialogues generally sit quietly *beside their husbands* and don't speak unless given permission *by their husbands* or are called upon *by their husbands*. In one case, one of these wives upon being called on, gave what seemed to be a very scripted message.[1]

This statement reveals an assumption that what is being said by the Muslim woman had been rehearsed; prepared. Respondent #1 is wondering if it was the woman's honest opinion or what she was requested to say; the assumption of control by men. Respondent #2, a Muslim woman who has been involved in interfaith dialogue for six years, half of which has been in coordinating activities had this to say as well, "[Muslim women] have a lack of confidence to approach the issues." [2] Additionally, Respondent #7, a Jewish woman, who not only participates in interfaith dialogues, but has worked professionally documenting them as well,

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[1] Respondent #1, question 8.
[2] Respondent #2, question 8.

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has said, "[Muslim women have a] lack of confidence in their own abilities."[1] Interesting insight was given by Respondent #8, "There are never enough women to do the dialogues, and frequently, they are too shy and the experience is negative."[2] It definitely is not the recommendation of this researcher that Muslim women refrain from interfaith dialogue because *the experience is sometimes negative* but that they strive to become more accustomed.

Furthermore, Respondent #9 of Presbyterian denomination, says that her biggest obstacle in participating in dialogue is the discomfort she feels because they are attended mainly by Muslim men and rarely women.[3] How can Muslims break through the stereotypes if half of their community is not present? This same respondent goes on to say that in the presence of Muslim men, the Muslim women rarely if ever spoke and eventually she stopped attending altogether because of this reason.[4] On a more unfortunate note, she continued,

> When I asked the Muslim men, with no Muslim women in attendance, why the women did not speak when in a group with the men, I was told, tradition. I asked if it were part of the religion. They said, yes, maybe.[5]

Respondent #10, a formal member of the Catholic Church, emphasized the issue not only exists with Muslim women but also with all women, saying that "we don't have as many "leaders" as we need."[6] Meaning women are needed with the experience to facilitate learning together. She continued, "I don't necessarily see that as a bad thing- just a step along the way

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[1] Respondent #7, question 9.
[2] Respondent #8, question 8.
[3] Respondent #9, question 6.
[4] Respondent #9, question 8.
[5] Respondent #9, question 9.
[6] Respondent #10, question 9.

and an affirmation of where we need to develop."[1] This is the direction that Muslim women need to take and this advice should be well taken.

In part, we read between the lines to discover what Respondent #7 states clearly, **"women are not recognized as *imams*, and therefore lack a certain religious authority."**[2] It is presumed, however, that if a poll was taken of interfaith dialogue male participants, we might find as well that are not *imams* nor hold religious authority either. So the question left to this researcher is: Do women have to be formally educated in Islamic sciences and certified as formal leaders of the faith to be taken seriously while their male counterparts do not?

Finally, Respondent #14, a Jewish woman who has been involved in interfaith dialogue for 26 years, had the following positive observation to say that indicates to what lengths "the other" may be willing to go to understand Muslim women. I might add, quite creative as well. She was contemplating the reticence of the Muslim women and their "unwillingness" to participate and if it was a generational or cultural phenomenon so she came up with an idea. She encouraged the Muslim men to bring along their daughters to the dialogue meetings. Low and behold, it seemed as if the younger women were more comfortable expressing their own opinions even in the company of men they did not know.[3] Again, this researcher is left to question whether this is due to the fact that the younger Muslim women viewed the unfamiliar men, all of whom were at least a generation older, as "uncles"; or if a married Muslim woman have less freedom to speak their mind; or if it is due to being raised in America, a second generation phenomenon. If it is due to the generation gap rather than the gender gap, the older generation of Muslim women must change. As stated previously, many times the average age of the non-Muslim interfaith participant is 75

[1] Respondent #10, question 9.
[2] Respondent #7, question 8.
[3] Respondent #14, question 8.

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years[1] and if we seek optimal conditions to dialogue as peers to one another we cannot afford the loss of the older generation role. If it is a gender issue than perhaps it will benefit the American Muslim community to discover how to best deal with this issue that suites the need. Either way, American Muslim women, regardless of their age must be more vocal and participatory and the American Muslims must discover a methodology to realize this. Respondent #1 questioned in relation to this gender theme, "What is it about these Muslim husband/wife relationships?"[2] The answers cannot be exactly identified in this research and probably the gender relation issues that cross religious, cultural and generational barriers are left for further examinations but it is clear there are gender issues that need to be addressed by the American Muslim community.

A shocking commentary can be read from Respondent #1; I have chosen to include it in full, for it speaks for itself and will definitely leave the reader to see the massive dilemma Muslims face in the West regarding gender issues. The dilemma is not singularly about how to deal with this perception that outsiders have while looking into the lives of Muslims but also from what are the actual messages that are being sent out by Muslims. While it can be said that there are clearly some misconstrued thoughts here, American Muslims cannot simply minimize all of its significance.

> Personally, I feel that there is something wrong with Muslim men. I understand that this is a somewhat radical statement, but you asked, and this is what I believe. Here are some of my observations:
>
> --Once, many years ago, I gazed at a beautiful beach on the Mediterranean Sea out of my window in a high-rise hotel in Algiers. The beach was filled with men enjoying the sun and water. Just men. Not a woman was to be seen.
>
> --This whole burkha/hijab thing. If a woman truly feels that this is an

[1] See section 3.3.1 Interfaith Dialogue: Advantages and Obstacles.
[2] Respondent #1, question 8.

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> expression of her faith and she chooses to wear one or the other of these, I understand, and applaud her decision. Outward expressions of inward faith are to be respected. When the wearing of this clothing is dictated by men or politicians and is imposed on an entire society, I find that extremely offensive. Then it can be seen as a way for men to keep "their" women in their place, and further seems to be a way for men to keep their own sexual desires in check. Muslim men seem so afraid of their own biological urges and so afraid that they won't be able to control themselves. It's almost like a cultural disease that has taken hold of them. They seem to be in perpetual adolescence and fearful of growing up.
>
> --There appears to be a huge divide between Muslim men and Muslim women. They seem to live in separate cultures even as they live together and side by side in families and neighborhoods.
>
> --I think that Muslim women all over the world need to come to terms with their men, and to become more prominent in public roles in such a way that men begin to see that they are just as capable as the men are. But that may be the problem. Women are just as capable, just as smart, and this seems to terrify Muslim men who then in turn must work to keep them hidden.[1]

Would it be fair to say that *men* are the main obstacles that Muslim women face when participating in interfaith dialogue or any leadership role? One thing can be said for sure. The gender relations of Muslims are not fully understood by non-Muslims in the West. It is clear that this misunderstanding by non-Muslims and misapplication of Islamic gender equity matters by Muslims is inhibiting successful dialogue and may very well be promoting some of the very negative stereotypes of Muslim women that interfaith dialogue is trying to

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[1] Respondent #1, question 9.

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overcome. Muslim women definitely need to become more prominent in public roles, as Respondent #1 has stated. If we could suggest one very important step that Muslim women can take right now to begin to move beyond this negative stereotype, it would be to initiate interfaith dialogue even if it is only women. Some of the Respondents have indicated that this kind of dialogue is more successful. Respondents #1 and #9, who were both strongly opinionated about the "participation" of the Muslim women, had this to say respectively,

> I participated in a Muslim/Protestant dialogue a couple of years ago with just women in attendance. What a difference! The women were outspoken, feisty in their relationships with each other, and seemed completely open with the Protestant [women].[1]

and

> Only once when we separated into male [only] and female [only] groups did [Muslim women] talk, and quite freely. It was wonderful! I then proposed, and we had a Presbyterian-Muslim Women's all-day retreat, which was satisfying and successful.[2]

4.2.2 Understanding the Objectives of Interfaith Dialogue

Another prominent theme seemed to surface from mainly a non-Muslim perspective, but comments from the Muslim participants seemed to indicate their awareness; specifically Respondent #6, questions 6 and 7. This concern is about participants understanding the objectives of interfaith dialogue, putting into practice the objectives and respecting these objectives. Respondent #7 said it was her greatest obstacle as well as Respondents #1, #4, #12, and #13 all non-Muslim. But Respondent #8, a Muslim woman who has been involved in interfaith dialogue for 30 years recalls early on similar attitudes, "…when [there exists]

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[1] Respondent #1, question 8.
[2] Respondent #9, question 8.

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someone [who] insists that you are incorrect [about your own faith] and does not allow you to hold your own perspectives or facts about your own faith." But it was Respondent #11 who expressed it clearly, and said it was her second biggest obstacle, "At times [I am] having the feeling that someone is trying to convert me to their side."[1] Basically, this issue is a matter of trust and trusting each other**;** "that each religious group has a desire to protect their own interests above the interests of the larger interfaith community."[2]

It seems that politics can still play a role and that the impression is Muslims do not really care much about learning about the other faiths or that there are preconceived notions that are wrongly held. Even after many years of dialogue some Muslims still equate Christians with Catholics. Respondent #11 seemed to imply that if there are differences [or obstacles] then the need for respecting one another must remain. Some of the Muslim respondents indicated that their fear of offending "the other" and finding the proper way to convey Islam without sounding preachy was a big obstacle as well. Respondent #13 said that there is a need to fashion clear objectives that would lay a foundation for building an atmosphere of trust.

4.2.3 Other Factors and Obstacles of Interfaith Dialogue

Another obstacle mentioned by one of the respondents, #14 about the fear and anxiety present at the first meeting and overcoming the trust factor should be well noted for while only mentioned by this one respondent it was surprising not to see this fear expressed more as it is evidently an obstacle. It was therefore categorized under miscellaneous.

> The biggest obstacle is encouraging people to come to the table for the first time. After that, it is not too difficult to get people to talk about themselves and to talk with others, slowly learning about one another, losing the fear and

[1] Respondent #11, question 7.
[2] Respondent #7, question 6.

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> anxiety about one another, and building up understanding and respect and trust for the "other". This is relationship building at its best."

Perhaps the other respondents have forgotten this initial fear of "the other", or realized that after coming to the dialogue table, the trivialness of such an obstacle or but maybe there exists the fear of having the fear and therefore not expressed by the respondents. This researcher cannot say for sure but for those who have tried to organize an interfaith group for the first time, know this obstacle well; both sides of the faith.[1] When approaching potential participants for a first meeting there is fear from the unknown not of just the other but what is interfaith dialogue all about; what will be expected from the participant.

The next three frequently stated obstacles need mentioning. All have been referred to earlier in the thesis; the generation gap, time constraints and the other expanding the dialogue objectives beyond just reporting or declaring one's own faith. Four responses have indicated that there is a generation gap and Respondent #5, a Muslim, described it as her second biggest obstacle, "I am dealing with an older generation from the opposite side." Eight respondents focused on the obstacle of busy lives and not enough time to participate. Eleven responses were concerned about the kind of dialogue that is taking place and made suggestions to expand activities to educational possibilities outside the dialogue to cooperative social and civic activities together. Final common obstacles that were beyond a secondary obstacle status were from language and cultural differences.

4.3 The Analysis of the Survey

In an analysis of the responses one can discover, if not by just taking notice of the number of years they have been involved in interfaith dialogue and continue to be involved, that these women truly believe in these efforts and wish for more outreach to "the others" of their communities. Respondent #10, a formal member of the Catholic Church, a sister of

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[1] This researcher's personal experience from many years indicated both of these notions.

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Sion, said, "As more and more Catholics become open to these kinds of experiences, it is sometimes difficult to provide them with the opportunities of interfaith dialogue."[1] This indicates a rise in demand for interfaith dialogue with Muslims. Many of the non-Muslim women surveyed conveyed the message of their desire to improve dialogue with Muslim women; to create more opportunities for the younger generations; to develop long term planning for educational purposes; to move on to deeper subjects/discussions; and to break down the obstacles in order to continue sharing with Muslim women around the festive table i.e. breaking bread together. Respondent #5 said that the women should get out "doing things in the public, such as both sides going to colleges, churches [other churches], schools [all] together and educating the public about our similarities more than [our] differences."[2] Respondent #14 sums it all up by indicating,

> In the women's groups, women spoke out loud and clear. ***In fact, women are much better at dialogue than men***, because men tend to wear their institutional hats even at a dialogue table….Moreover; I have noticed a very articulate Muslim woman who becomes silent when her husband is around in a [mixed setting].[3]

4.4 The Concluding Remarks of the Survey

While the results of the survey show similar themes to the original assumptions made by this researcher, these results are subject to interpretation, as with the example of the men bringing their adult daughters to the dialogue table. Furthermore, some comments were harsh, yet reflective and although possibly based on misinterpreted or misunderstood doings they still need to be heard by the Muslim communities in the West; to try to understand what it is about the stereotypes of women in particular that stick. It is the duty of the Muslims,

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[1] Respondent #10, question 9.
[2] Respondent #7, question 8.
[3] Respondent #14, question 8.

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especially in the West, to convey the correct perspectives of Islam and Muslims, including Muslim women from all directions; i.e. either Islam, culture, extremist or irreligiousness.

Interfaith dialogues that encourage dialogue at a grassroots level are the best for breaking down stereotypes, reducing tension and developing 'new' and correct perspectives about the other because it reaches the common person not just the academic. A grassroots movement is driven by community members not the media, politics or other traditional power structures. But this does not mean that faith leaders do not have to involve in dialogue, they must at their level in order to encourage and motivate their congregations to interfaith dialogue as well.

Not only will dialogue enrich your own self understanding because it will force an introverted examination of the self and one's faith but it will build bridges. Bridges that community members can cross based on trust and an affirmation of the other. However, trust cannot be fully met initially and it may only be dealt with incrementally, little by little, because we must face it, a lot of tension exists based on the massively pervasive stereotypes and this is all the more reason to begin. The Muslim communities in the West cannot delay participation and they cannot participate with only half of their community. Muslim women must take active, leading and an authoritative role not only with 'women-only' activities; although this is where they can begin to gain footing and where women on both sides of the fence, so to speak, can affect the communities in which they live. Finally, a summary of the results, as mentioned above, indicate that the myths of Muslim women have not been corrected fully but also as important is a lack of understanding dialogue. Perhaps, American Muslims need training and an expanded understanding of *da'wa* and dialogue. Perhaps, community workshops and more variety of opportunities are needed to experience "the other". The lack of youth representation is also an issue and that might as well be addressed in the development of methodology. If creative and more attractive means are developed that

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may help with the generation gap and the time constraint gap. Finally, language and cultural issues may be lessened with experience and involvement in community life to help develop confidence. Muslim communities should collectively examine these issues and develop various methods to combat their isolationist tendencies because the solution lies in being present and contributing.

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Conclusion

Conclusion Part One: An Interfaith Message- Anecdotal

In summary this thesis has attempted to elucidate the predicament of American Muslims and all Muslims living in the West, for that matter, and why they must work at participating in bringing Islam to the world stage not as a *civilization to clash* with the West but as a phenomenon with purpose and mission; to bring responsibility and justice to the global context; not to remain indifferent or complacent. To become part and parcel of the religious fabric; to be vital and valid factors; to be genuine and sincere; to be trusted citizens of the world and particularly with and among fellow citizens of humanity where ever they be, in the West or in the East. All of the above can be achieved through dialogue; interfaith dialogue; interfaith dialogue with men and women; women with distinction and authority.

I would like to end with what I believe to be the interfaith quote of the century. Just to add that I personally and fortunately had the pleasure of meeting the Reverend Willie Barrow and participating with her in the video documentary Ties That Bind[1]; Artistic Circles[2]. The Reverend Willie Barrow[3], is minister and civil rights activist nicknamed "The Little Warrior" for her tireless work as a social and spiritual activist. She has spent her entire life on the front lines of the civil rights struggle. One of Barrow's key roles was as field organizer for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. during the major civil rights marches and demonstrations of the 1950s and 1960s. Currently, Barrow serves as co-chairperson of the Rainbow-PUSH Coalition, the organization that grew out of Operation BREADBASKET. At the Coalition,

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[1] *Ties That Bind* catapulted artistic circles into the national arena in a new way in our 18-year history. This documentary was not only nationally syndicated and won awards, but is also being used as an activist tool in interfaith and diversity conversations, and social and cultural organizations nationwide. Outreach in 2006-2007 was extensive and national. There were more than 50 town hall meetings at houses of worship, universities, high schools, theatres, and corporate diversity sessions. Several national conferences featured *Ties That Bind* - including the National Conference of Humanities Councils, National Conference of Urban Ministries, and "Women and Religion in the 21st Century."

[2] http://www.artisticcircles.org/Programs/Ties/participants.html January, 2011.

[3] http://www.thehistorymakers.com/biography/biography.asp?bioindex=32&category=ReligionMakers January, 2011.

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she coordinates the activities of the national organization and serves as an aide to the Reverend Jesse Jackson, with whom she has shared a partnership since the first days of BREADBASKET. Barrow has been honored with a doctor of divinity degree from Monrovia, Liberia, and a certificate in leadership from Harvard University. In September 1997, a street on Chicago's South Side was renamed in her honor. Earlier that year, the Reverend Willie Barrow Wellness Center was opened. The Center is a clinic housed within Doctor's Hospital that treats those with limited healthcare benefits. Together with the Barrow Health Mobile Clinic, these services bring affordable and accessible health care to needed areas in Chicago. Through these institutions, the legacy of Barrow continues to provide inspiration. It is with this interlocutor that I quote, the Reverend, speaking impartially, rather than exclusively, as she appeals to the condition of humanity. ***"We are not so divided as we are disconnected. So let's connect! Let's stay connected."***

Dialogue connects but it is the participants who can and must stay the connection.

Conclusion Part Two: Why did I write this thesis? -Anecdotal

I will never forget a time, back in the mid '90's, when I was feeling somewhat discouraged because my Muslim community was not particularly supporting the interfaith dialogue work I was coordinating; it always seemed to be the last agenda item in board meetings as if it were superfluous work.[1] I had begun to think it was enough that I was not being prevented from the outreach I had with a local Catholic Church; always fearing that it might be interpreted as not representative of a certain school of thought or ideology of Islam and plenty of doubts were flying around. Even Muslim women were asking me, *"What are you getting out of this?"*, or *"Has anyone converted to Islam?"* Not only were they oblivious

[1] After 9/11 when my own neighborhood was being threatened and many from outside our faith came to support us, those of us in the interfaith efforts were being thanked for bridging relationships; eyes were then opened to our initiatives.

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to the social necessity of interfaith dialogue but they were completely unaware that the idea of converting or proselytizing had nothing to do with interfaith work at all.

How do you continue when those around you are unaware; unsupportive? Even I was beginning to reconsider and contemplate whether my time outside of the home could be better used at the kid's school or supporting the converts/reverts at the mosque by dedicating my time in those areas. I was facing choice and my confidence was lingering. How should my community activity best be utilized? I know I have to be an influence somewhere.

Then, I think it was the start of the third year of organizing an interfaith dialogue with this particular Catholic Church[1] that I walked into a meeting somewhat disheartened. I noticed one of my Catholic colleagues, sitting with pen and notebook, anxiously waiting for the others to arrive so that we could begin our meeting. I remarked, "You look chipper. Spread some good spirit over here." or something to that effect. This is the part I will never forget. She said, "I have to take good notes tonight because all the women I work with will be waiting for me to report to them what [the Muslims women] have to say tonight." She was so excited, "Every time we meet for dialogue they insist I report. Even my mother, my sister and my neighbor ask." Well, my jaw fell open. I thought, me dejected? Never again.

No **institutional** meeting of interfaith dialogue ***with men***, and their institutional hats leading the way could ever have reached such depth. And I have attended quite a few to say the least e.g. institutional, organizational, academic, civic, grassroots, you name it, I attended. She may have been using the word "report" but she was not going to be "reporting", she was going to be conveying a message. An amazing message. The message that Muslims are part and parcel to humanity and that we have something vital and valid to contribute to the communities in which we live; that Muslims are not the monsters the media has been

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[1] This particular interfaith group is now entering their 14th year of dialogue, mashaAllah. They have annual community banquets, serve the needy and homeless, and provide talks and information together at local schools and clubs.

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portraying; not the terrorist. A message that Muslims; should not be marginalized; or side-lined; or ignored; or discriminated against. That the Muslim women she meets with are not the oppressed, ignorant, second class citizens that stereotypes would have one believe. That the Muslim women she meets with are vibrant, independent, intelligent, educated, religious, kind, caring, and happy; most of all happy and love being Muslim; Muslim women who are married to kind, caring, faithful, giving and God-conscious husbands and fathers too.

It had just never occurred to me or been proven to me that our voices were being heard beyond the walls of that meeting room where they seemed to be only whispers. “Perhaps there is some wisdom in this approach of thinking globally but acting locally.”[1] It was that night that I was convinced that I had a role in interfaith dialogue bigger than just sitting across a table, whoever sets it. And that interfaith dialogue had to be expanded to include more activities and reach more community members, especially Muslim women, because it will not only inspire the seeking of more Islamic knowledge because there are plenty of questions to answer but to develop understanding and wisdom and that is for today’s Muslim woman the essence of authority. Because when women talk about faith, we talk with our hearts open and when we wish, we wish for peaceful living free from prejudice and hatred and when we all seek, we seek justice and we all become a little more willing to support one another on the road of good will to all.

Conclusion Part Three: Thesis Recap and Recommendations.

- The “Islamophobic industry” involves media, polity, and even the American religious communities. Therefore it becomes crucial for the American Muslims to involve particularly with interfaith communities to set aright what the “Pat Robertsons” and other evangelical churches are scheming as well as effect attitude change at a grassroots level.

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[1] Khan, page 81.

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- Institution building in the American Muslim communities is still evolving but some excellent and high potential examples already exist; CAIR, MAS and ISNA all have primary objectives involving interfaith dialogue in order to weave and integrate the American Muslims as vital and valid elements in the American religious fabric by constructing, supporting and championing the relationship formations that "constitute a new interreligious infrastructure"[1] in America.
    - Islamophobia has not receded; therefore, the efforts of the American Muslims cannot stop combating this "industry" but rather than remaining in a reactionary state they must discover ways to be pro-active and prevent further harm; to resist isolationist tendencies due to fear or aversion and allow for the emersion into society to prevent it and negate its pervasiveness. American Muslims must discover appropriate assimilation and the means to integration without losing one's identity as a Muslim.
- The two most stereotypical symbols are that Islam is violent and it oppresses women. When addressing these issues and important question to ask: Do women have to be formally educated in Islamic sciences and certified as formal leaders of the faith to be taken seriously while their male counterparts do not? The presence of women currently in interfaith dialogue does not match that of the presence of men. Even when she is present she is marginalized by her Muslim male counterpart. This must change.
- Vital to the defining and redefining the meaning of Islam in America is American Muslim woman and the roles she adopts. None can refute the long line of influential women in the American story or the Islamic story; therefore, American Muslim

[1] Eck.

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women must come out of the margins of society and take on the roles that are in tune with Islamic character and best to pleasing their Creator (swt).

- The one factor that is missing as Muslim intellectuals and scholars address the *ijtihad* and the rigorous discourses that must take place as Muslims find themselves permanent inhabitants as minorities in non-Muslim lands is the gender dynamic and contribution; they should no longer diminish the woman's role in scholarship by imprinting upon them the influences of "modernity" or "progressive" attitudes; have discourse, prove or disprove but engage each other to determine; do not deny or disqualify the right of women's participation and role.
- **Intra**faith dialogue, as poignantly discussed with Dr. Aminah McCloud cannot be overlooked or sidelined. The need to know each other is as important as a need to know "the other" especially targeting to close the gaps between the immigrant Muslim community and the African American Muslim community.
- *Da'wa* as more fully understood in the Western if context drops the old adages of proselytizing and propagation toward a demonstrative and contributory nature without complacency, an "us vs. them" attitude. Contribution **is** the solution.
- The possibility that Muslim women preachers can exemplify, demonstrate, and epitomize a more tolerant and peaceful Islam vs. an extreme or oppressive depiction while debunking the stereotype of Muslim women is one too promising to discount. The current state that lacks American Muslim women in authoritative or leading religious positions; her weak or low confidence in this area or the sometimes negative experience should not prevent her from striving to become more accustomed and experienced. After all, American Muslims cannot break through the stereotypes with only half their community present.

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- Dialogue does not mean squelching "the other" or exhibiting superiority nor is it about conformity and compliance but it is about mutual understanding and simple tolerance would be deficient. A goal of dialogue is not only to spread religious literacy but to understand ethnic diversity and a willingness to break down the stereotypes and seek cooperation for the betterment of society is part of its ultimate goals.
- Truth and trust are the most sustaining factors of a pluralistic society. Currently, Islam and Muslims are in a state of mistrust, in America and globally. This condition must first change before Islam and Muslims can affect positive influence. Interfaith Dialogue is a comprehensive way to bring Islam and Muslims closer to the American people.
- All of mankind, men and women, were created to serve and lead. Muslims have been given the distinction to witness to all of mankind the most perfect message, Muslim women just as Muslim men, and to be righteous witnesses of this message to all; therefore, Muslim women must be present and representative in society.
- It is quite possible that there is some truth to the Muslim woman stereotype. Even interfaith dialogue partners, with vested interest to see beyond the stereotypes, still arrive at an understanding that if Muslim women are not oppressed they may be suppressed, see section 4.2.1 of Chapter Four: The Survey.

After the examination of the American Muslim community, its history and development, one can recognize that although many accomplishments have occurred it still suffers from incomplete and unsettled conditions, disconnected achievements and an underdeveloped leadership. This condition, however, does not adequately combat the urgent crisis that has developed because of the Islamophobic "industry". Therefore, this researcher adamantly believes that interfaith dialogue will assist American Muslims in becoming part

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and parcel to the religious fabric of America in an appropriate and positive manner which will in turn rebut any and hopefully all Islamophobic tendencies sufficiently. While organizations like MASFreedom Foundation, CAIR, ISNA and The Muslim Legal Fund of America[1]/[2] all implement interfaith dialogue and activities on many levels; this must translate into a definite and unambiguous confirmation in Islamic *da'wa* effort by American Muslims.

However, because the effects of Islamophobic rhetoric and polity are critical and relentless it behooves the American Muslim community to expedite this process to becoming part and parcel to the religious fabric of America. Therefore, this researcher recommends the acceptance; the development; the support; the programs; and the institutionalized effort of bringing Muslim women into more leadership and authoritative roles so that she can cooperate in establishing the well-being of society. She literally has the face value to negate, combat and remove altogether the doubt regarding the attitudes, the practices and the misrepresentations that Islam is violent or advocates an enemy or that it allows for the oppression of women.

While the highest of distinction was given to the wives of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), *The Mothers of the Believers*, Muslim women should not shy from their role as mothers, mothers of their communities or as mothers of their societies. Women reach into the heart of community life and should no longer ignore their duty to effect and affect community well-being; in America this means not only the community of Muslims. The role of Muslim women in community can no longer be limited to the interiors of the home and solely raising children. Mothers must be aware of the conditions of the communities in which

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[1] **The Muslim Legal Fund of America Fighting for Legal Justice Since 2001**. 2011 01 04 <http://www.mlfa.org/>.

[2] MLFA work at combating Islamophobia and its campaigns, they are still primarily reactionary. Organizations like these have initiated programs of integration was established in November 2001 by a coalition of civil rights activists seeking to redress systemic discrimination against Arabs, Muslims, and South Asians. While these communities have historically not been immune from discrimination, the horrific terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 caused a surge in discrimination, hate crimes, and unlawful profiling by both public and private sectors.

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they reside and they must have a hand in its well-being because if not how will they be expected to guide their children, whom they send out each day.

If Muslim women are absent from society on any level then something will be missing waiting to be filled by something else. Today, the expectations of homemaking and the rearing of children are disproportionate to the needs of the communities. A lack of balance is seen in this world of consumerism and materialism and well meaning people of faith must do more in their neighborhoods. It is suggested that two very important steps be taken to change this attitude in Muslim communities: **One**, broadening the horizons of leadership by opening the doors of opportunity in all dimensions but particularly in interfaith dialogue to include women and **two**, persuading more Muslim women to commit to participating and remaining consistent, dedicated and active in interfaith dialogue.

Currently, in America the tensions are high with regard to Islam and Muslims and the role that interfaith dialogue can take to calming the condition is urgently needed. The role of American Muslim women must expand. Her ***example*** in the community and in interfaith dialogue will negate the attitude that Islam oppresses women as well as tone down the stereotype of Islam being violent. Non-Muslims in America **need** to see Muslim women in “proper lighting” and see the feminine dimension which has been unknown and misunderstood. Besides it will not only empower her religiously but it permits her to bring home the feelings of a pluralistic society. Those feelings are translated into positive attitudes and a greater sense of humanity is developed. She can set a tone of peace. And then Muslims the world over may be in a position of trust, again, and possibly leadchange. God-willing.

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APPENDICES

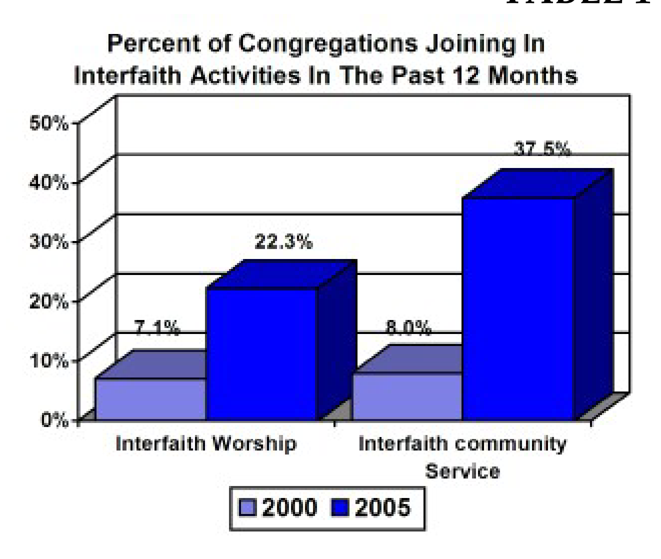
A, B, K, M, N, R, T, V, X, Y, AND Z

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Appendix A

Growth of Interfaith Activities in the U.S. and UK

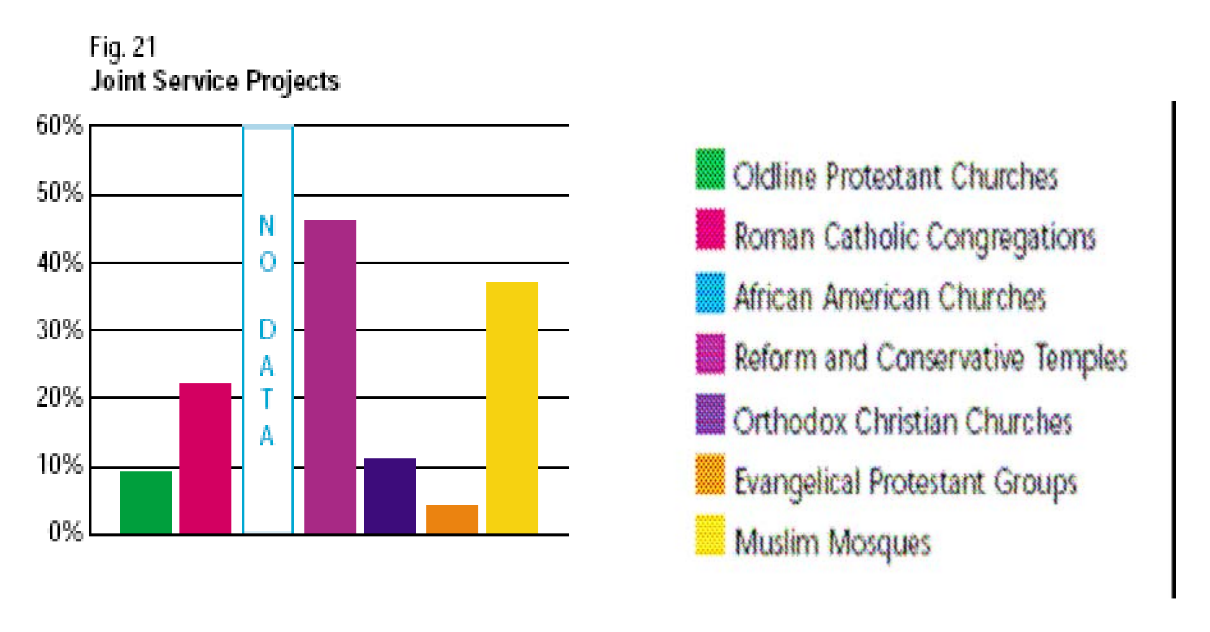
TABLE 1



David A. Roozen, “Faith Communities Today: American Congregations 2005,” The Hartford Institute for Religion Research, 2007. Available online at: <http://fact.hartsem.edu/American%20Congregations%202005%20pro.pdf>.

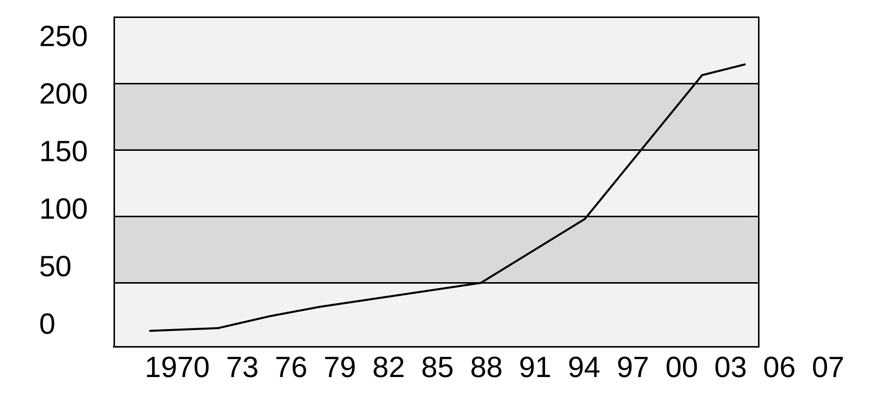
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TABLE 2



David A. Roozen, "Interfaith FACTs: Meet Your Neighbors," The Hartford Institute for Religion Research, 2003. Available online at: <http://fact.hartsem.edu/MeetNgbors1.pdf>.

TABLE 3



Growth of number of Interfaith Organizations in the U.K. from 1970 to 2007

Inter Faith Network for the UK, "Annual Review, 2006-2007," London, 2007. Available online at: <www.interfaith.org.uk/publications/annrev2007.pdf>

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APPENDIX B

Interfaith and Outreach Organization Objectives

1. **Catholics must speak out against Islamophobia**

3/9/2011 - Opinion Interfaith Political - Article Ref: NC1103-4555
Number of comments:
By: Jeanne Clark
National Catholic Reporter* -

http://ncronline.org/news/why-catholics-must-speak-out-against-islamophobia

retrieved March 13, 2011

2. **MAS Freedom calls for Interfaith support during Congressional Hearings**

As Salaam Alaikum!

As we are sure that you already know, major congressional hearings on the subject of "Islamic Radicalism" have been scheduled for some time in March, 2011, by the new chair of the House of Representatives Homeland Security Committee, Rep. Peter King. Many of us in the leadership of national Muslim organizations have expressed grave concerns that both the substance and tone of these proposed hearings will be used by some anti-Muslim organizations and individuals to unfairly marginalize our community, while attacking our legitimate freedoms and civil liberties.

But we are not alone in these concerns. Many leaders in the interfaith community have now come out to support Muslim leaders and organizations as these House of Representatives hearings are being organized. They believe, as we do, that there are real and legitimate concerns that Muslims share with all people in America about our collective security. But they also believe that Rep. King's troubling and highly prejudicial statements about Muslims, and major Muslim American organizations, will not lead to a public events that is either fair, or at reflects the truth of who Muslims really are. Such a letter, signed by interfaith organizations and leaders, is included for your review.

Inshallah, we are asking all MAS chapters to share this letter with Muslim and interfaith leaders in your communities, and to ask them to sign on to the letter and to send it to Rep. Peter King (R-NY). We hope to send copies of this letter to Rep. King and to remind him that there are many faith leaders who stand with their Muslim friends in this critical issue of fairness and truth.

We thank you and as Allah to bless you in this effort to build critical support for our community at this time of great national discussion about the real security needs of our nation.

Wa'alaikum As Salaam,

Ibrahim Ramey
MAS Freedom

(Interfaith leadership letter on the subject of proposed House Homeland Security Committee hearings on "Islamic Radicalism.")

The Honorable Peter King
339 Cannon House Office Building

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Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative King:

We write out of concern over hearings that the House Committee on Homeland Security, has proposed on "Islamic Radicalism". We strongly urge you and your colleagues to revise both the content, and the scope, of these proposed hearings. As religious leaders we are concerned about the safety of all segments of our society, the protection of our civil and religious liberties, and the values we as Americans may put at risk in the name of security.
While we affirm the country's need to understand and effectively address the issues of terrorism in all its forms, we believe the approach that you have articulated thus far is counter-productive. We do support our government in taking appropriate measures to safeguard the people from the dangers posed by violent extremism, whether foreign or domestic, and we believe that the department of Homeland Security can play a vital role in protecting the American people from those who seek to harm us.

However, we are alarmed and saddened that the proposed hearings are narrowly focused on "Islamic Radicalism." We are troubled that the declared intentions will only serve to further rend our social fabric over issues of religious difference and contribute little to our collective understanding of Islam or terrorism. There is great risk that these hearings will only further marginalize Americans who are Muslims - adding to tensions, not reducing them.

Violent acts of desecration of mosques, physical attacks on individual Muslim women and men in America, and incidents of overt discrimination and bigotry, have increased in our country in the years following the tragic September 11, 2001 attacks. The overwhelming majority of Muslims in America, and the major organizations in the Muslim community, have clearly denounced these extremist attacks. In many cases they have even helped to prevent further incidents of violence.

Further, your public statement that characterized 80% of mosques in the U.S as being run by "extremists" is neither factual nor helpful; it only adds to a climate of religious intolerance and hatred that risks weakening our nation rather than strengthening it.

Our concern is that an entire religion is being impugned for the heinous acts of a few of its deviant adherents. When such repugnant behavior is undertaken by Christians in the name of their religion (as it has and, sadly, may again) we do not respond in this way, so why do we do so now? Those few times when our nation has singled out entire religious or ethnic groups for suspicion, hate, and condemnation have been some of the most shameful moments in American history. May it be that our times will not be so remembered?

Extremism and terrorism are the bane of civilized society. Their causes must be identified and their elimination should be undertaken without hesitation. Hearings on terrorism may indeed be necessary and appropriate to protect our citizenry. But restriction of these proposed hearings to the Muslim community alone further stigmatizes a community still struggling to recover from the collective guilt and despair of 9/11, and gives a free reign to other extremist groups who can provoke mayhem when the time is ripe and find ready scapegoats in the Muslim community. If hearings are to take place, they must not single out a single group or community, and instead should investigate all forms of extremism that trouble our nation, including, for example, armed militia groups and racial supremacists.

The Muslim community of the United States is, by all social indicators, a growing and integral part of the interfaith mosaic of our diverse nation. Muslim organizations promote education, wholesome family activities, and greater civic engagement by the collective for the Muslim community. We appeal to you to look at American Muslims not as criminal suspects, but allies in the ongoing work to make America a safer and better place for all of us. Any attempt to portray Muslims as "un--American", or some kind of fifth column enemy, only plays into the hands of bigots. In the wake of the tragedy in Tucson it is essential for all responsible leaders to tone down the rhetoric, not dial it up.

We appeal to you to understand that the religion of Islam, and the millions of Muslims who call America their home, must not be portrayed as our enemies, or be targeted by our elected leaders for prejudice or hatred.
Each of our religious traditions teaches essential lessons of hospitality, respect and charity. These enduring values have shaped the character of a free America, but each generation must embrace them anew if they are to remain vibrant and available to succeeding generations. We pray that they will not be sacrificed on an altar of security that is fueled by the flames of fear.

We will deeply appreciate your efforts to help re-frame these issues within Congress, even as the signers work to address these concerns among religious groups and in society.

Sincerely yours,

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MAS Freedom (MASF) is a civic and human rights advocacy of the Muslim American Society (MAS), the largest Muslim, grassroots, charitable, religious, social, cultural, civic and educational organization in America - with 55 chapters in 35 states.

http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?llr=qta9hbcab&v=001uhMSa17EQAc4M6UWHYy5caKv_NmsmR7P5kuDHT6DezWVLJRgd-Df6KL7VWwYZKsWmxNucZVYovVTUGBpPOQQDXifOPWjC2SjYO5ImCL0Mhu-c34uo5UOkGOfEkTu8GKYqr3aRecjQhc%3D Retrieved February 16, 2011

3. **Chicago Tribune editorial urges DuPage to approve mosque**

CIOGC (Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago)and MECCA (Muslim Educational and Cultural Center)Board Members along with Josh Hoyt from ICIRR (Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights) and Dr. Scott Alexander from the Catholic Theological Union met with the Tribune a few weeks ago to explain the case for MECCA and other DuPage County mosques and the opposition they are facing.

http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2011-02-17/news/ct-edit-mosque-20110217_1_muslim-educational-muslim-leaders-mecca-mosque retrieved March 13, 2011

3. **First interfaith teen delegation at IMAD 2011**

Muslim, Jewish and Christian youth discuss how to advocate for equitable education with their legislators; A beaming example of solidarity in action.

From the CIOGC news@ciogc.org

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Appendix K

Karen Pearl Danielson
18 Sama Al Sarhan Street, Apt.#3
Dahiyat AlRasheed
Amman, Jordan

DOB: 06/05/1964
Mobile#: 079-665-5385
Landline#: 06-515-2821

1982 Fenton High School Bensenville, Illinois Activities and Awards: Basketball, Tennis, Bowling, Speech/Debate Team, Theatre; State Competition performances and Most Improved Actress, Best Actress Award

1982 Southern Baptist Church of Bensenville, Summer Youth Bible Camp Counselor

1982-1983 College of DuPage Glenn Ellyn, Illinois General Studies Courses; Theatre Club; assistant-director of Winter production

1983 Faith Baptist Bible College Ankeny, Iowa Bible Study; 1 semester

1983 Converted to Islam after independent reading of the Qur'an.

1984-1990 Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Illinois BA in Biological Sciences(University appointed SIU-C Student Life Advisor, elected official Coordinator for 3 consecutive years of the Muslim Students' Association)

1990-1992/1994-1995/1996-1997/2000-2003 Universal School, Bridgeview, Illinois Office Manager, *Islamic Studies Instructor, Leadership Training and Community Service Coordinator; Journalism Instructor; and Yearbook Advisor for 10th-12th grades (*Intermittent dates due to residency in Jerusalem and Amman Jordan - note: returned to employment upon each return to the States)

1992-1994 Aqsa School, Bridgeview, Illinois Office Manager, *Islamic Studies Instructor, Leadership Training and Community Service Coordinator 11th-12th grades*

1995-1996/1997-1998 Resided in Jerusalem; studied Classical Arabic informally at Notre Dame Center, Jerusalem, 6 months each year.
2000 Resided in Amman, Jordan; studied Classical Arabic at the Language Center (level 2), University of Amman, 6 months

2002-2005 Muslim American Society, Chicago Chapter Director of Public Education & Outreach Department and Coordinator of Freedom Foundation

2003-2006 Muslim American Society, Chicago Chapter Director and Organizer for 100+ troops of the ***Girl Scouts of America***; Junior and Senior Troop Leader(ages 13yrs-18yrs old).

2006-2011 Currently residing in Amman Jordan, studied Classical and Modern Standard Arabic at the Language Center, University of Jordan(levels 4 and 5) and Qasid Center, Amman, Jordan (levels 2 and 3); additionally, a current candidate in the Master's Program of Islamic Studies at the University of Jordan, GPA 3.8.

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1990-2005 Biography of Social Activism

Karen was intricately involved in interfaith dialogues & trialogues which has included the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago, Catholic Schools, American Jewish Council, community interfaith projects, and women in leadership activities in a variety of Chicagoland Schools, Colleges and Universities.

She has been is an active member in the **Interfaith Committee of the Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago** and was a founding board member of CAIR-Chicago(Council on American-Islamic Relations).

She has been an active participant with Token of Time Productions, a multimedia group striving to provide the correct understanding and image of Islam and Muslims thru television media; program development and live host.

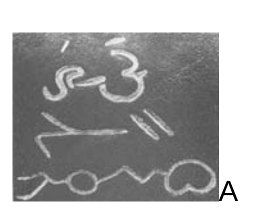
She has also been an active member of the Outreach Committee of the Mosque Foundation, Bridgeview, IL.

Personal: Karen is a wife and mother of 5 between the ages of 14 and 24 years. She enjoys reading, travel, camping, gardening, and being environmentally aware. She enjoys studying the Arabic language and Qur'anic recitation but is only semi-fluent. She has mentored many Muslim youth toward being more socially and religiously conscience, active and environmentally aware because of their religion, Islam.

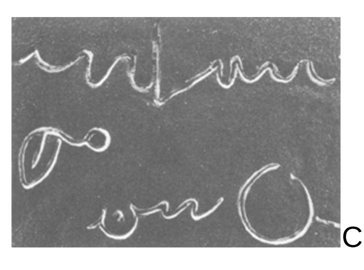
Ties That Bind -Ties That Bind premiered in 2004 in Barcelona, Spain at the "Pathways to Peace" conference arranged by the
Council for a Parliament of the World Religions and UNESCO. Karen was featured as Participant/Leader in this Documentary of Intercultural Women's Leadership Artistic Circles; PBS WTTW Channel 11 in Chicago.
http://www.artisticcircles.org/Programs/Ties/participants.html

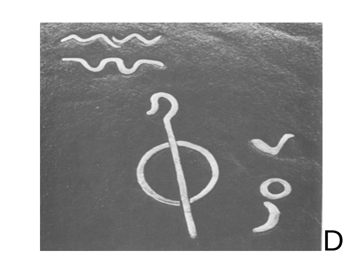
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APPENDIX M

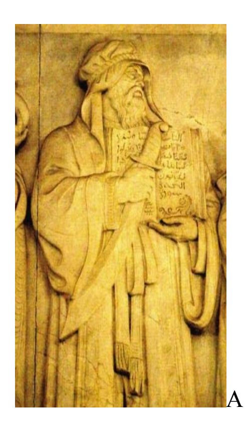

A

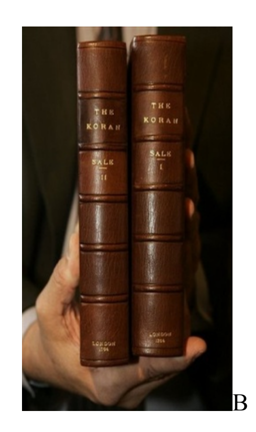

B


C


D

Source: Saga America by Barry Fell 1980
A-Inscription Date: circa 700 CE
-Location: Nevada
-Description: "Nabî 'llâh Muhammad," ("Prophet of God, Muhammad") was probably cut into the rock, in ancient Kûfic script, as part of the permanent school lessons of the Arabic-speaking Libyan settlers of the desert Southwest. It was mistaken for Amerindian markings of about 1000 CE.
B-Inscription Date: circa 700 CE
-Location: Nevada
-Description: "Ismi Allâh," ("In the name of God") has been inscribed on this bedrock in ancient Kûfic script. On the top are hieroglyphs depicting mountains (center, above), lakes(above, right) and cactus (above, left).
C-Inscription Date: circa 700 CE
-Location: White Mountains, Nevada & California
–Description: "Shaytân maha mayan," ("Satan is a fount of lies") reads this Classical Kûfic Arabic, some two feet across, on a boulder on the west slope of Boundary Peak, in the White Mountains near Benton,
on the border of Nevada and California. The style of the script indicates a date after seventh century CE, and the unknown scribe was a Muslim.
D-Inscription Date: circa 800 CE
-Location: Inyo County, California
-Description: "Yasus ben Maria," ("Jesus, son of Mary") is inscribed on this rock in Kûfic Arabic script. This text was deciphered by Fell himself and was confirmed by competent Arab scholars. It has been dismissed by an archeological journal as "an obvious attempt (by Fell) to appeal to the religious." But in fact neither the antiquity of the inscription, nor its translation is disputed by leading archeologists.


A



B

A. A frieze of a man holding the Qur'an in the United States Supreme Court Building. (City-Data.com)

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B. The Qur'an of Thomas Jefferson, Founding Father and 3rd President of the United States. (CAW)



Job Ben Soloman (*Ayub*) 1732 (Austin)



Ibrahim Abd ar-Rahman 1828 (Austin)



Muhammad Alexander Russel Webb[1]



African-American slavery and freedom from the collections of the Library of Congress[2]





Mother Mosque of America 1934; repurchased and refurbished in 1990[3]

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[1] http://www.salaam.co.uk/themeofthemonth/june02_index.php?l=6
[2] http://www.sonofthesouth.net/slavery/african-slave-ship.htm
[3] http://www.mothermosque.org/

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APPENDIX N

Banning Mosques

DuPage/Ground Zero/Palos Hts IL

Media Coverage of Pending Mosque Approval

The New York Times

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/18/us/18cncmosque.html?_r=2&pagewanted=all

A long battle over a proposed mosque in DuPage County is approaching a turning point, and although anti-Muslim sentiment and resistance to mosques in the Chicago area are hardly going away, Muslims appear to be winning this time.

The Muslim Educational and Cultural Center of America, or Mecca, wants to construct a 47,000-square-foot building in Willowbrook, one that includes a school, a recreational center and a 600-person prayer hall. The plan has been scaled back since a county committee rejected an earlier proposal in January, and the smaller building is considered likely to be approved by the DuPage County Board, which has the final say.

The Mecca proposal is one of four mosque-related plans to come before the DuPage Board in recent years as the Chicago-area Muslim community has grown significantly. The rhetoric that has followed has highlighted tensions about development of the rural and suburban county and has exposed anti-Muslim sentiment.

More than 400,000 Muslims live in the Chicago area, the majority of them in the suburbs. Zaher Sahloul, chairman of the Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago, an advocacy group, said many Muslims had to drive 40 minutes or more to attend Friday prayers at one of 120 mosques in the area. “There is a real need to accommodate this growing community,” he said.

In DuPage County, the battle over the proposals underscores a broader demographic shift. The DuPage Federation on Human Services Reform, a collaboration between government and community groups, said the number of foreign-born residents in the county had increased to 171,000 in 2009, from 71,000 in 1990. Foreign-born residents now make up more than 17 percent of the population of nearly a million in an area long dominated by Caucasian, mostly rural residents.

Accommodation has been hard to come by. In the past year, the DuPage Zoning Board of Appeals has taken advisory votes against the Mecca proposal and another from the Islamic Center of Western Suburbs. The DuPage County Board has rejected a mosque plan from the Irshad Learning Center.

The tensions in DuPage reflect wide-ranging antagonism toward Muslim-Americans. Last year, local residents battled mosque proposals in Tennessee, Wisconsin, California and other states. There was a contentious nationwide debate over a proposed Islamic cultural center near ground zero in Lower Manhattan.

Rhetoric intensified last week at a congressional hearing, led by Representative Peter King, Republican of New York, into the radicalization of some American Muslims. Mr. King, chairman of the House Committee on Homeland Security, has put forward unsubstantiated claims that more than 80 percent of American mosques are run by radical clerics.

“Negative views of Muslims have been increasing in the last 10 years, and the King hearings will likely add to that,” said Mr. Sahloul. “But putting a lot of limitations on where mosques can be built is against our values as Americans.”

In the Chicago area, residents in south suburban Bridgeview voiced opposition over the Bridgeview Mosque Foundation’s expansion of its mosque, partly because of concerns about the presence of radicals within the mosque leadership. Last year, the City of Chicago rejected a plan to build a mosque on the site of a vacant hot dog restaurant in Rogers Park.

The DuPage mosque proposals can be seen as litmus tests — with uncertain results so far. Although the Irshad Learning Center was rejected last year, Mecca appears to be headed for approval of its plan to build on a five-acre wooded plot near 91st Street and Highway 83 in unincorporated Willowbrook. Mecca leaders have cut the size of their plan several times, added underground containment tanks to address flooding concerns and expanded parking space.

“It’s clear that Mecca has gone above and beyond what’s been requested by the board and by their neighbors,” said Amy Lawless Ayala, lead organizer of DuPage United, an umbrella group of local churches, mosques and community associations that backs the proposal.

Mark Daniel, the lawyer for Mecca, said he was optimistic the board would approve the proposal. “At this point there is no legal basis for denial,” he said.

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Some Muslims see a proposed DuPage ban on new places of assembly in unincorporated residential areas as a further anti-Muslim act. But one board member, Grant Eckhoff, described it as an attempt to preserve the county's rural character.

People who live near the Mecca site say they would oppose the plan even if an Ikea store were being proposed. "No one on this block has expressed any worries about religion that I know of," said William Gerow, 64. "This is a rural neighborhood and that's an urban development. We have a clash of lifestyles here."

Constance Gavras, who heads the Kane County chapter of Act! for America, a group known for its anti-Muslim protests, has rallied opposition to DuPage mosque proposals for two years. "A lot of these mosques are directly connected to terrorist organizations,"she said.

When Irshad's proposal for a three-acre mosque site near Naperville was before the county board last year, Ms. Gavras distributed I.R.S. documents showing that the Alavi Foundation, a New York nonprofit and the subject of an F.B.I. investigation into its ties to the Iranian government-run Bank Melli, contributed $450,000 to Irshad in 2007.

Mahmood Ghassemi, Irshad's chairman, confirmed the Alavi donation and said Irshad was still repaying an additional $300,000 loan. "We applied for the money and received the money at a time when Alavi was not under investigation," Mr. Ghassemi said. They were perfectly legal."

The county board rejected Irshad's proposal last year even after the group amended it to address community concerns about traffic, hours of operation and parking.

Anti-Muslim activists are "vocal and powerful, and we feel they were the driving force for the county to reject our application," said Mr. Ghassemi. "We fulfilled all the requirements, so I don't see any other reason besides being Muslim."

Still, Mr. Ghassemi said, he has seen very little religious bias during his 13 years living in DuPage.

The Chicago chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, a national Muslim support group, filed a federal lawsuit against the DuPage Board over the Irshad rejection, alleging discrimination and violation of constitutional rights. According to the filing, a board member, John Hakim, asked at one hearing if "animal sacrifices" would be part of the services. The board has moved to dismiss the case. Mr. Hakim did not return a call for comment.

"We think there is a bias against the Muslim institutions," said Kevin Vodak, the lawyer for CAIR-Chicago. He noted that the board rejected the Irshad proposal without explanation, which is highly unusual, and that last fall the county took up an amendment to prohibit any new religious institutions in residential areas. "Most of the new proposals are from Muslims," Mr. Vodak said.

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March 17, 2011

Muslim Cultural Center Appears Near Approval

By DAVID LEPESKA

A long battle over a proposed mosque in DuPage County is approaching a turning point, and although anti-Muslim sentiment and resistance to mosques in the Chicago area are hardly going away, Muslims appear to be winning this time.

The Muslim Educational and Cultural Center of America, or Mecca, wants to construct a 47,000-square-foot building in Willowbrook, one that includes a school, a recreational center and a 600-person prayer hall. The plan has been scaled back since a county committee rejected an earlier proposal in January, and the smaller building is considered likely to be approved by the DuPage County Board, which has the final say.

The Mecca proposal is one of four mosque-related plans to come before the DuPage Board in recent years as the Chicago-area Muslim community has grown significantly. The rhetoric that has followed has highlighted tensions about development of the rural and suburban county and has exposed anti-Muslim sentiment.

More than 400,000 Muslims live in the Chicago area, the majority of them in the suburbs. Zaher Sahloul, chairman of the Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago, an advocacy group, said many Muslims had to drive 40 minutes or more to attend Friday prayers at one of 120 mosques in the area. "There is a real need to accommodate this growing community," he said.

In DuPage County, the battle over the proposals underscores a broader demographic shift. The DuPage Federation on Human Services Reform, a collaboration between government and community groups, said the number of foreign-born residents in the county had increased to 171,000 in 2009, from 71,000 in 1990. Foreign-born residents now make

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up more than 17 percent of the population of nearly a million in an area long dominated by Caucasian, mostly rural residents.

Accommodation has been hard to come by. In the past year, the DuPage Zoning Board of Appeals has taken advisory votes against the Mecca proposal and another from the Islamic Center of Western Suburbs. The DuPage County Board has rejected a mosque plan from the Irshad Learning Center.

The tensions in DuPage reflect wide-ranging antagonism toward Muslim-Americans. Last year, local residents battled mosque proposals in Tennessee, Wisconsin, California and other states. There was a contentious nationwide debate over a proposed Islamic cultural center near ground zero in Lower Manhattan.

Rhetoric intensified last week at a congressional hearing, led by Representative Peter King, Republican of New York, into the radicalization of some American Muslims. Mr. King, chairman of the House Committee on Homeland Security, has put forward unsubstantiated claims that more than 80 percent of American mosques are run by radical clerics.

“Negative views of Muslims have been increasing in the last 10 years, and the King hearings will likely add to that,” said Mr. Sahloul. “But putting a lot of limitations on where mosques can be built is against our values as Americans.”

In the Chicago area, residents in south suburban Bridgeview voiced opposition over the Bridgeview Mosque Foundation’s expansion of its mosque, partly because of concerns about the presence of radicals within the mosque leadership. Last year, the City of Chicago rejected a plan to build a mosque on the site of a vacant hot dog restaurant in Rogers Park.

The DuPage mosque proposals can be seen as litmus tests — with uncertain results so far. Although the Irshad Learning Center was rejected last year, Mecca appears to be headed for approval of its plan to build on a five-acre wooded plot near 91st Street and Highway 83 in unincorporated Willowbrook. Mecca leaders have cut the size of their plan several times, added underground containment tanks to address flooding concerns and expanded parking space.

“It’s clear that Mecca has gone above and beyond what’s been requested by the board and by their neighbors,” said Amy Lawless Ayala, lead organizer of DuPage United, an umbrella group of local churches, mosques and community associations that backs the proposal.

Mark Daniel, the lawyer for Mecca, said he was optimistic the board would approve the proposal. “At this point there is no legal basis for denial,” he said.

Some Muslims see a proposed DuPage ban on new places of assembly in unincorporated residential areas as a further anti-Muslim act. But one board member, Grant Eckhoff, described it as an attempt to preserve the county’s rural character.

People who live near the Mecca site say they would oppose the plan even if an Ikea store were being proposed. “No one on this block has expressed any worries about religion that I know of,” said William Gerow, 64. “This is a rural neighborhood and that’s an urban development. We have a clash of lifestyles here.”

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Gound Zero Mosque

- http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,2011400,00.html



Wednesday, Aug. 18, 2010

Ground Zero: Exaggerating the Jihadist Threat

By Romesh Ratnesar

Should Muslims be allowed to build a mosque at Ground Zero? Merely posing the question is an act of deliberate distortion. As its defenders point out, the Community Center at Park51 will occupy not a solitary inch of the 16-block site on which the Twin Towers stood. Once built, the center will indeed house a mosque, "open and accessible to all" — but also a swimming pool, basketball court, auditorium, library, day-care facility, restaurant and cooking school. The center is being built by a private organization on land it legally owns. Twenty-nine out of 30 lower Manhattan community-board members voted to approve it. By every legal standard, the case for allowing Park51 to be built is, in the words of conservative UCLA constitutional-law professor Eugene Volokh, "open and shut."

But the question isn't going away. President Obama's statement on Aug. 13 endorsing "the right to build a place of worship and a community center on private property in lower Manhattan" has unleashed another storm of partisan bloviation. Obama is "pandering to radical Islam," says Newt Gingrich; John Boehner finds Obama's comments "deeply troubling." On this issue, the President's critics have public opinion on their side: nearly 70% of Americans in a CNN–Opinion Research Corporation poll say they oppose a Ground Zero mosque. (See Mark Halperin on why the GOP should avoid the issue.)

Many opponents of the Park51 project claim that the mosque itself isn't the problem; it's the idea of building it so close to the World Trade Center. Such misgivings have some validity. But the heat the mosque controversy has generated, on both the left and right, is unhealthy, misplaced and ultimately self-defeating. It reflects our tendency to exaggerate the real threat posed by Islamic extremism and what the U.S. should do about it. And nine years after 9/11,

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the fight over the mosque near Ground Zero shows how obsessed we remain with an enemy that may no longer exist. (See more commentary on Islamophobia and the mosque debate.)

The mosque's critics and champions both say their goal is to counter radical Islam. In his Aug. 3 speech defending the Park51 project, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg said that "we would play into our enemies' hands" if we were to deny American Muslims the right to build a mosque where they choose. "To cave to popular sentiment would be to hand a victory to the terrorists," Bloomberg said. New York Congressman Jerrold Nadler, a mosque supporter, says, "Everybody's liberty is at stake here." The mosque's opponents make the same argument in reverse. Gingrich has called the Cordoba Initiative part of "an Islamist cultural-political offensive designed to undermine and destroy our civilization." Building the mosque, in the words of one conservative columnist, would be "a symbolic monument to the triumph of Islamism in the United States." (See the moderate imam behind the planned mosque near Ground Zero.)

The prevalence of such rhetoric on both sides of the mosque debate makes it seem as if the struggle against global jihadism hangs in the balance. The truth is that Osama bin Laden and his ilk face much bigger problems. The story of the past decade in the Muslim world is that of the widespread rejection — or "refudiation," to borrow a phrase — of terrorism. A study by the Pew Research Center earlier this year found that support in Muslim countries for suicide bombings has fallen precipitously from post-9/11 levels. One-third of Pakistanis believed terrorism was justified in 2002; now just 8% do. For all our anxiety about the rise of religious extremism, no government in the Arab world has been toppled by forces sympathetic to al-Qaeda since 2001. And though some militant Muslims surely wish us harm, their ability to actually inflict it has eroded; it has been more than five years since the last successful al-Qaeda attack in the West.

The eclipse of al-Qaeda has come about largely through revulsion at the jihadists' indiscriminate slaughter of fellow Muslims, from Indonesia to Iraq. And yet we have failed to notice. A Gallup poll taken in June found that Americans still believe terrorism is a bigger threat to the future well-being of the country than health care costs, unemployment and illegal immigration. (Only the federal debt was deemed an issue of equal seriousness.) America's post-9/11 obsession with terrorism, the belief that we are locked in an epic ideological struggle with radical Islam, has stretched our resources to the limit and distracted us from higher-order priorities. National myopia poses a bigger challenge to the U.S.'s long-term stability than terrorism ever will.

What does this mean for the mosque near Ground Zero? However the dispute is ultimately resolved, its impact on the "threat" posed by radical Islam will be negligible. That's because the threat is receding on its own. Allowing a place of worship to be built in lower Manhattan will constitute neither an American triumph nor a defeat. It will simply tell the world that this nation, wisely, has decided to move on.

Palos Heights, IL



Palos Heights Mosque Case Puts Spotlight on Religious Freedom (Illinois) — Printable View
May 22, 2005

By Staff Writer

Chicago Sun-Times

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On May 22, 2005 the *Chicago Sun-Times* reported, "although Al Salam Mosque Foundation's attorney Gregory Kulis is disappointed a federal court jury rejected the Muslim group's claims that Palos Heights violated its civil rights and kept it from building a mosque five years ago, he's glad the lawsuit put a glaring spotlight on the issue of religious freedom. 'We're glad we brought this to the attention of the nation,' Kulis said Saturday, pointing to the national media coverage and half-dozen books dealing with the Chicago area Muslims' plight. 'Despite the verdict, this case will hopefully teach people that these type of actions are not condoned.'"

Full Story: http://www.suntimes.com/output/news/cst-nws-mosque22.html

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Appendix R
Shari'a Interview with Intisar Rabb

Setting the Record Straight on Sharia

An Interview with Intisar Rabb
By Sally Steenland | March 8, 2011 http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/03/rabb_interview.html



SOURCE:Intisar Rabb Listen to this interview (mp3)

Intisar Rabb is a member of the law faculty at Boston College Law School where she teaches advanced constitutional law, criminal law, and comparative and Islamic law. She is also a research affiliate at the Harvard Law School Islamic Legal Studies Program and a 2010 Carnegie Scholar. She is particularly interested in questions at the intersection of criminal justice, legislative policy, and judicial process in American law and in the law of the Middle East and the wider Muslim world.

She has served as a law clerk to the Hon. Thomas L. Ambro of the U.S. Court of Appeals, Third Circuit, and subsequently worked with members of the bench and bar in the United Kingdom as a Temple Bar Scholar through the American Inns of Court. Rabb has traveled for research to Egypt, Iran, Syria, and elsewhere.

Sally Steenland: Sharia has been in the news these past few months as states like Oklahoma have passed laws banning Sharia and other states are proposing similar laws. Most people, however, don't actually know what Sharia is. Can you tell us what Sharia is—and what it is not?

Intisar Rabb: Sharia is the ideal law of God according to Islam. Muslims believe that the Islamic legal system is one that aims toward ideals of justice, fairness, and the good life. Sharia has tremendous diversity, as jurists and learned scholars figure out and articulate what that law is. Historically, Sharia served as a means for political dissent against arbitrary rule. It is not a monolithic doctrine of violence, as has been characterized in the recently introduced Tennessee bill that would criminalize practices of Sharia.

S: Are there similarities between Sharia and religious practices in Christianity or Judaism?

I: Yes. Sharia historically was a broad system that encompassed ritual laws, so in some ways it is like Jewish law that has rules for how to pray, how to make ablution before prayers—that sort of thing. There are also broader principles that Sharia tries to embody, such as justice and fairness.

S: So Christians might practice their faith by tithing—giving money to their church. They might pray before meals. They might observe certain religious holidays. They might not shop on Sunday. But they still obey local laws, federal laws, and the Constitution. For Muslim Americans, what are some ways they observe Sharia?

I: The examples you gave are parallel to the practice of Sharia in daily life. There are certain tenets of Islam that require Muslims who choose to adhere to it to give to charity, to pray, to attend the mosque, to fast during the month of Ramadan. These are some examples of how Muslims fulfill religious obligations.

There are social obligations as well. I like to point to an organization in Chicago—the Inner City Muslim Action Network—that says it is inspired by Islamic precepts to give back to the local community, to make sure that the poor, needy, and disenfranchised in one's community are taken care of. That is an example of the practice of Sharia in America.

A final example involves areas where Muslims are concerned about private affairs, such as marriage laws. Just as Christians have weddings in a church, Muslims often have weddings in a mosque or some other venue presided over by an imam, and the marriage is also solemnized by the state. There is a religious aspect and a state aspect to a wedding ceremony.

S: What do you say to critics who claim that Sharia is a threat to democracy and that we need laws forbidding it so that Sharia doesn't take over America? Also, can you discuss how religious codes and the U.S. legal system can live side by side?

I: As you know, I teach both American law and Islamic law in an American law school, so I am very much attuned to seeing issues of religion in terms of American federal and state laws. The First Amendment affirms the free exercise or practice of religion and at the same time forbids the establishment of religion by government.

These twin clauses of free exercise and nonestablishment allow a wide array of religious practice in America—Islam being one of them. This has been part of the fabric of American religious and civic life since our founding. In fact, Muslims have been part of our country since before its founding, as many were brought to this country as slaves.

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We have never had a threat to our democracy from the long-time religious practices of Muslims in America. I think in part that stems from the nature of Muslim religious practice in this country—it is more of a private religious matter than a very public iteration. It also speaks to the strength and flexibility of our laws, both state and federal, that continuously affirm religion as a value. We want to encourage its free practice while also not establishing religion in any governmental sense.

S: You say that Muslim Americans have been in this country for hundreds of years, which means that people have been practicing their faith, including Sharia, for a long time. This is not a new thing. Why do you think it's getting attention now?

I: In a word, I would say politics. Leading up to the midterm elections in November 2010, there was the mosque controversy in New York and the specter of Muslims taking over. We saw an anti-Sharia law in Oklahoma. The anti-Sharia bill in Tennessee goes a lot further. In my view a lot of it had to do with the politics of equating Sharia with Muslims, with terrorism, with national security, and with an attempt by some, especially on the right, to rally support around a wedge issue.

It can strike some sensitive chords because we have had horrible tragic events happen to us. With the events of 9/11, with the wars in the Middle East that raise the specter of Islam as a negative phenomenon—playing on those fears is being used 10 years after the attacks.

S: You mentioned the anti-Sharia law that was introduced in Tennessee. My understanding is that it goes further than the Oklahoma ban and that in Tennessee it would be a felony to practice Sharia, which means it would be a felony to pray, to give money to charity, to fast. Is that correct? And if so, would it be a felony for everybody to pray, or does the Tennessee law single out Muslims? Does it say that Christians and Jews can pray and give money to charity and Muslims cannot?

I: According to the draft text I have seen of the Tennessee bill, it would be a felony for Muslims to perform everyday religious practices like praying, giving to charity, or fasting because they would be defined as banned Sharia practices. That is clearly unconstitutional because it violates the religious free exercise clause of the First Amendment and is a violation of equal protection laws.

There may be times that we as a state want to limit some aspects of the private practice of Islamic law. A California court, for example, ruled that allowing women to take a certain sum of money upon divorce, as is typical in Islamic marriage contracts, was against the state's policy of forbidding profiteering from divorce. Other courts have found differently on that issue. And so there may be times when the issue arises as to whether Islamic legal practices conflict with public policy, and then the courts will resolve these issues and they will be adhered to, as they were in the California case. But to issue a blanket ban on otherwise lawful and wholly permissible and civically valuable religious practices is what the Tennessee law proposes to do and is unconstitutional.

S: You gave the example of California courts and divorce. Do courts get involved with the religious practices and laws of other faiths, where teachings regarding something like divorce may bump into civil law?

I: Yes. Law courts, when presented with an issue, whether it comes from a religious contract or a secular private contract that seems to conflict with public policy—then, yes, law courts adjudicate those issues. They could come from Judaism, Christianity, Islam, or other religions. Courts are seeking to make sure that state policy is the supreme law of the land. Typically, matters such as marriage and divorce proceed informally. It is only in the rare instance that the matter goes to court. And then judges will adjudicate matters in reference to American law. So there is no threat that Sharia, or any other religious law, will supersede the laws of the state.

S: Let's talk about Sharia in other countries. Critics of Sharia speak as if it were a monolithic punitive system that threatens to take over the United States. You have said that some Muslim-majority countries adopt Sharia and some do not.

I: Of all the countries that are part of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, 26 countries make Islamic law a source of law according to their constitution. Of that number, all but five apply Sharia only to matters of family and inheritance law. So the number of countries where Sharia is the law of the land is extremely small. Saudi Arabia and Iran apply Islamic law most extensively.

But among other countries with Muslim majorities, there is Turkey that follows a French model of secularism. We have countries like Senegal, which doesn't have a particular legal status for Islamic law. Then there are countries like Egypt, which has Islamic law as a part of the constitution as a source of law. In the three decades since that law was inserted in the constitution, Egypt did not turn into an authoritarian Islamic state. It was authoritarian, but not on the basis of Islamic law. Incidentally, that clause remains with revisions to proposed amendments to the constitution. And the supreme constitutional court of Egypt has managed to work out definitions of Islamic law that come from secular judges. They do not allow religious clerics, who are not part of the state system, to define what the state law is, even when it relates to Islamic law.

S: Religions such as Christianity and Judaism include different traditions, interpretations, and disputes about sacred texts and teachings. Do different interpretations exist within Sharia as well?

I: Absolutely. The $64,000 question of the day is who gets to speak for Sharia. Traditionally it was this class of educated jurists or scholars who spent a lifetime studying legal texts and theory and practice. They were much like the jurist consults of ancient Rome or the law professors in modern America. Imagine if law professors got to say what the law is. That is the equivalent of classical Muslim society as to who got to speak for Islamic law.

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Even then there was a wide diversity of opinion. There is an old joke that if you put four law professors in a room and ask them a single question, you will get at least five answers. It was a lot like that. There were four major Sunni schools and three major Shia schools even in the premodern period.
Now in the modern period, there is even more diversity of opinion. Not only are these scholars saying that they have the authority to interpret Sharia but other individuals are saying that they also have the right to say what Sharia is. So we have some scholarly informed interpretations of Sharia, based on considerable research, again like law professors. And then we have popular Islamic legal opinions that would apply to many in the Middle East, and perhaps beyond that, who decide that they can interpret what Sharia is.
In addition, we have others who intentionally distort Sharia to serve their political ambitions. The latter category applies to the likes of bin Laden in the Muslim context and people like Newt Gingrich in the American context. These people are clearly at the margins of the conversation. Out of 1.3 billion Muslims in the world, we hear of a handful of folks following interpretations like the one bin Laden espouses. It is newsworthy because it is rare.
S: It sounds like you're saying Sharia is not monolithic. It is not frozen in time but is dynamic and open to different interpretations. It has popular self-appointed experts, legal experts, and religious scholars, all of whom are having their say in terms of what they think Sharia is.
I: Yes. There are many who claim to speak for Sharia. In Islam there is no church akin to the Catholic Church. There is no pope. With so little hierarchy, you get a very diffuse, Protestant-like view of what Islamic law means in the religious lives of individual Muslims and communities.
S: In your view, what are the consequences of misperceptions about Sharia in this country?
I: I think they are largely negative, with some small positive glimmers. Misinformation results in fear mongering that is used for political ends. It has resulted in profiling against ordinary American Muslims. It may have a chilling effect on the civic engagement of lawful activities like charitable giving, praying, and carrying out the religious practices of ordinary life.
The positive glimmer is that perhaps all the negative press creates some sort of interest in knowing about what Sharia actually is. To the extent that misinformation about Sharia encourages dialogue, discussion, and public education, I think there can be a positive outcome if we continue to educate ourselves about what Sharia is and what it is not.
S: Let's say someone is reading this interview who would like a few facts to remember about Sharia. What would they be?
I: Sharia represents ideals of justice, fairness, and the good life—ideals that Americans hold dear. And it is worth learning more about Sharia.
S: One last question. Can you translate the word "Sharia" and tell us what it means?
I: Sharia literally means "the way." The full meaning is "the way to justice that is willed by God." The attempt to find the way is an enduring attempt for humans of all ages. The best ideals of justice are a work in progress, not a finished product.
S: Thank you, Intisar, for talking with us. All best wishes in your work.
I: Thank you.

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APPENDIX T

– Allied Media Corp. Multicultural Communication. http://www.allied-media.com/AM/ retrived 1/5/10.

Muslims American Demographic Facts

8 Million Muslims in North America

Four Even Quadrants	National Average[1]
African American	24%
Arab Americans	26%
South Asian	26%
All Other	24%
Total	100%

- 7 million in the U.S.; 1 million in Canada.
- Larger than Norway, Finland, Denmark, Switzerland & Sweden.
- Annual growth rate of 6% versus 0.9% for total U.S.[2]
- Interaction between Indigenous and Immigrant Muslims is limited.
- Same size community as Hispanics 25 years ago.

[1]Zogby International, August 2000 [2] U.S. Census Data 2000

Data Provided by Bridges TV- American Muslim Lifestyle Network

American Muslims are Younger

- 67% of adult American Muslims are under 40 years old
- 67% of the adult American population is over 40 years old[3]
- American Muslims are younger and future of America:

Adult Age	American Muslim[1]	American Muslims[2]	Total Americans[3]
18-29	39.8%	26.1%	14.1%
30-49	49.5%	52.4%	31.1%
50-64	6.4%	16.7%	27.7%
65+	1.0%	4.8%	27.2%

[1]Cornell University [2]Zogby International, August 2000 [3] U.S. Census Data 2000

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American Muslims are Well-Educated

- 67% of American Muslims have a Bachelor's degree or higher
- 44% of Americans have a Bachelor's degree or higher[3]
- The Variance for Advanced Degrees is even greater.
- One in ten American Muslim HH has a physician / medical doctor

Maximum Education	American Muslims[1]	American Muslims[2]	Total Americans[3]
Advanced Degree	42.7%	32.1%	8.6%
Bachelor's	35.2%	30.0%	35.1%
Some College	9.5%	19.4%	32.3%
High School	10.1%	14.1%	18.9%
No HS Diploma	2.4%	4.7%	4.7%

[1]Cornell University [2]Zogby International, August 2001 [3] Statistical Abstract of the U.S. 2001

American Muslims are Affluent

- U.S. Average income is **$42,158** per year (U.S. Census 2000)
- 66% of American Muslim HH's earn over $50,000 / year
- 26% of American Muslim HH's earn over $100,000 / year
- Annual Household Income range for American Muslims:

Annual Income	% of HH	Cumm
Under $25,000	13%	100%
$25K-$50K	21%	87%
$50K-75K	22%	66%
$75K-100K	18%	44%
$100K-$150K	14%	26%
$150K-250K	7%	12%
Over $250K	5%	5%

Source: Cornell University April 2002

Top 10 Occupations of American Muslims

Rank	Occupation	Percent
1	Student	20.2%
2	Engineer	12.4%
3	Physician/Dentist	10.8%
4	Homemaker	10.0%
5	Programmer	7.0%
6	Corporate Manager	6.4%
7	Teacher	6.4%
8	Small Business Owner	4.4%
9	Researcher	4.1%
10	Admin. Assistant	2.8%
	Total	84.5%

Source: Cornell University April 2002

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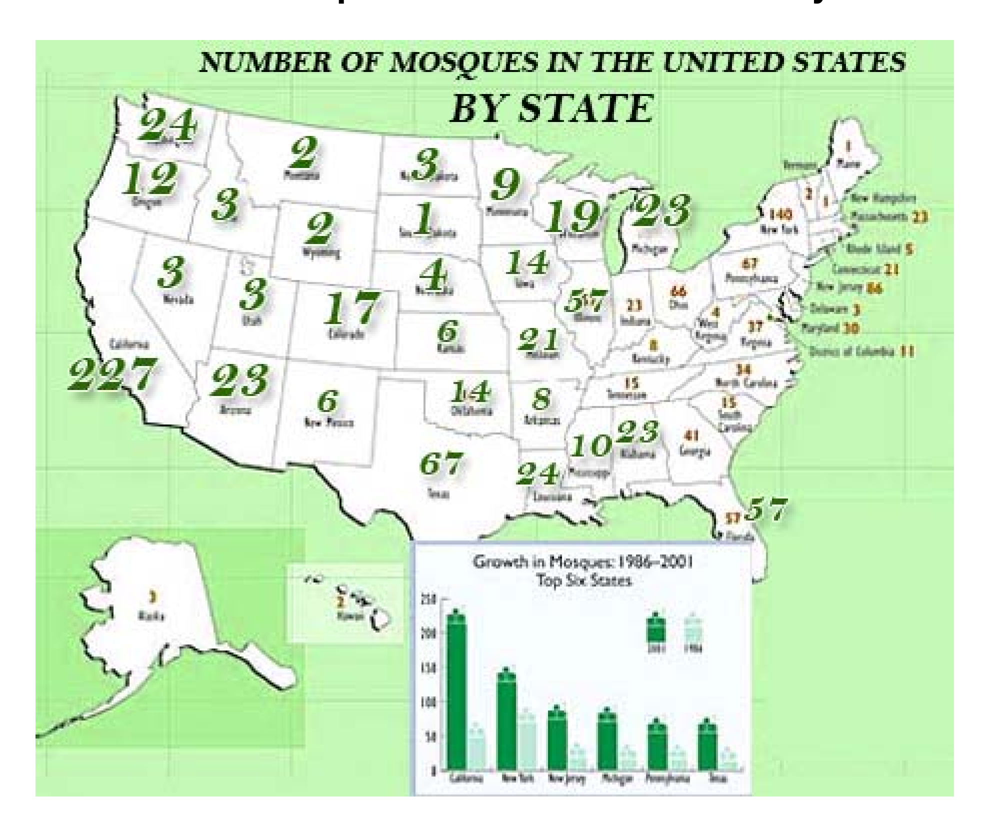
Under-Represented Occupations for Muslims

Occupation	Percent
Journalist/Editor	1.1%
Attorney/Lawyer	0.8%
Director/Producer/Actor	0.6%

- American Muslims are under-represented in occupations that make public policy and influence public opinion
- Few American Muslims pursue Print/TV/Film media
- American Muslims are unlikely to be in state legislatures and courts where laws are made and practiced.

Source: Cornell University April 2002

Number of Mosques in the United States by State



Demographic Facts

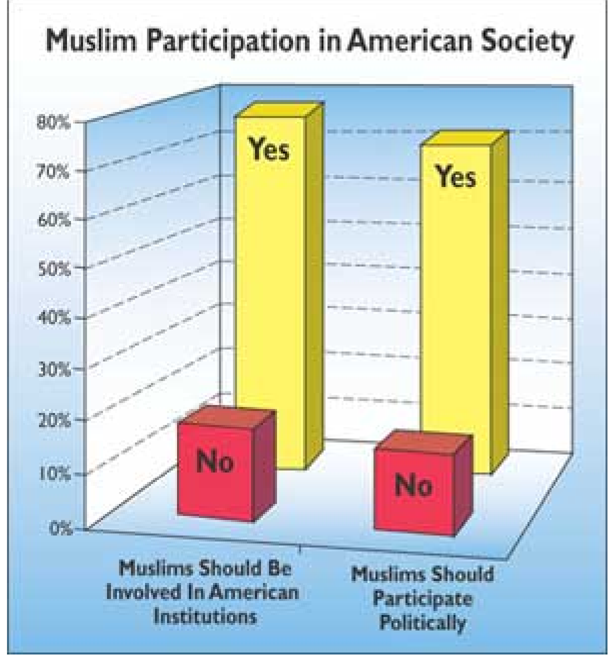
- Mosques in the United States: 1,209
- American Muslims associated with a mosque: 2 million
- Increase in number of mosques since 1994: 25 percent
- Proportion of mosques founded since 1980: 62 percent
- Average number of Muslims associated with each mosque in the United States: 1,625
- U.S. mosque participants who are converts: 30 percent
- American Muslims who "strongly agree" that they should participate in American institutions and the political process: 70 percent
- U.S. mosques attended by a single ethnic group: 7 percent
- U.S. mosques that have some Asian, African-American, and Arab members: nearly 90 percent
- Ethnic origins of regular participants in U.S. mosques:
  South Asian (Pakistani, Indian, Bangladeshi, Afghani) = 33 percent
  African-America = 30 percent
  Arab = 25 percent
  Sub-Saharan African = 3.4 percent

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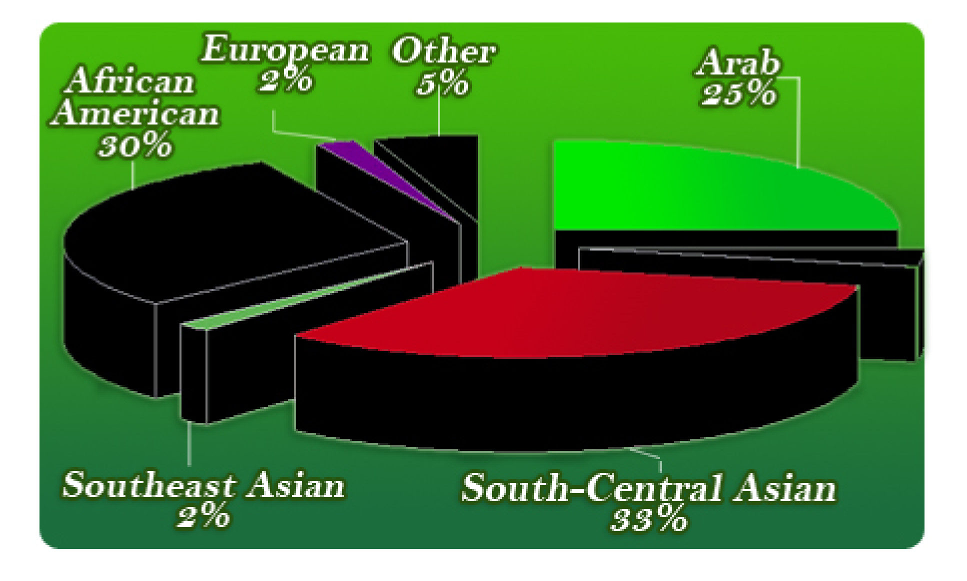
European (Bosnian, Tartar, Kosovar, etc.) = 2.1 percent
White American = 1.6 percent
Southeast Asian (Malaysian, Indonesian, Filipino) = 1.3 percent
Caribbean = 1.2 percent
Turkish = 1.1 percent
Iranian = 0.7 percent
Hispanic/Latino = 0.6 percent

- U.S. mosques that feel they strictly follow the Koran and Sunnah: more than 90 percent
- U.S. mosques that feel the Koran should be interpreted with consideration of its purposes and modern circumstances: 71 percent
- U.S. mosques that provide some assistance to the needy: nearly 70 percent
- U.S. mosques with a full-time school: more than 20 percent

The information above was drawn from the "Mosque in America: A National Portrait," a survey released in April 2001. It is part of larger study of American congregations called "Faith Communities Today," coordinated by Hartford Seminary's Hartford Institute for Religious Research in Connecticut. Muslim organizations cosponsoring the survey are the Council on American-Islamic Relations, the Islamic Society of North America, the Ministry of Imam W. Deen Muhammed, and the Islamic Circle of North America.



(Chart based on information from the Hartford Institute for Religious Research)



Source: CAIR

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APPENDIX V

Women Imams

Woman Imam Appointed In Belgium

MEMRI, DC October 28 2008

A mosque in southern Belgium has appointed a woman to the post of imam, to oversee outreach activity.

However, she will not be permitted to deliver sermons or to lead prayers.

The Executive Council of Belgian Muslims, which is in charge of Muslim ritual affairs in the country, called the move illegal because all imam appointments must go through the council.

Source: Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, London, October 26, 2008

http://europenews.dk/en/node/15441

retrieved 3/25/11

Europe's first woman Imam

The Al-Sahaba mosque in the northern Belgian city of Verviers has granted female Muslim professor Hawaria Fattah to fulfill the position of imam at the mosque. The move is the first of its kind both in Belgium, and in greater Europe. Fattah, along with two male imams, will supervise the preaching activities for women at the mosque. However, she will not deliver the sermon of Friday prayers or lead prayers, stressed Abdel Jalel Al-Hajaji curator at the mosque. The Belgian Justice Ministry has approved of Fattah's selection. She was born to an Algerian father and a Belgian mother, is 35 years old, and a professor of social and Islamic studies.

http://www.euro-islam.info/2008/10/25/europes-first-woman-imam/

retrieved 2/23/11

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Germany: Women Imams

Women rarely become preachers of the Islamic faith. In Germany there are only 13 female imams. Their job: pastoral care and integration. Mosques are urgently in need of women providing such services. Ulrike Hummel reports

They lead prayers, give Koran lessons and do an enormous amount of counseling. Whether in New York, Cairo or Istanbul: female Imams are in high demand at the moment. And there is plenty of work for them in Germany as well. Even though leading Friday prayers in front of a mixed congregation is taboo for the women of the Islamic world, mosque members are happy to rely on the services of female preachers for other types of work. Zeynep Cesen is 50 years old and one of the very few female imams who have come to Germany from Turkey especially to attend to women within these congregations.

http://islamineurope.blogspot.com/2008/11/germany-female-imams.html

retrieved 2/23/11

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APPENDIX X – THE SURVEY

I. Cover letter for Questionnaire

-----Original Message-----
From: **Karen Danielson** <kdanielsontawil@yahoo.com>
Date: Sat, Feb 28, 2009 at 3:02 PM
Subject: Women in Interfaith Ddialogue
To: Karen Danielson <kdanielsontawil@yahoo.com>

Hello and Assalamu alaikum,

I hope this reaches you in good health and good spirit, although times are trying all around the world. I am well and I miss my interfaith activities back in Chicago. I am sending this to several women that I have, at one time or another, participated with in interfaith/inter-religious activities, but I need your help to pass it on to at least two additional women who have participated in long standing interfaith dialogue. I thank you in advance for this.

You may know I am working on my master's degree in Islamic Studies at the University of Jordan. Currently, I am doing a research paper regarding *the major obstacles women face in interfaith dialogue* (particularly Muslim women but not exclusively). If you could please respond to the following questions (hit reply and then type on this same email using another color) and then send it as soon as possible, I would greatly appreciate it. You may respond as much as you like or limit your answers to one word or brief statements. I am considering my thesis statement and this research will greatly help me make some crucial decisions.

Again, thank you for your time, effort and consideration.

Sincerely Wasalam,
Karen Danielson
Candidate for the Master's Degree
In Islamic Studies
University of Jordan

II. Cover letter for Agreement Statement

-----Original Message-----
From: Karen Danielson <kdanielsontawil@yahoo.com>
To: Karen Danielson <kdanielsontawil@yahoo.com>
Sent: Sat, Oct 16, 2010 3:29 pm
Subject: Update Interfaith Dialogue Survey

Master's Degree in Islamic Studies at the University of Jordan. I knew this survey would help me to determine my thesis subject and material and it has. This is thanks to you and the many other participants in the survey.

Currently, I am preparing to defend my thesis, *An Evaluation of American Muslim Da'wa Effort: The Role and Obstacles of American Muslim Women in Interfaith Dialogue*. I have chosen to include the survey as part of my thesis argument in one of the chapters. In order for me to tie up a few loose ends I need to ask you for one last gesture. I have attached an agreement document. I would ask that you please read, add your name and date while also indicating your preferences, re-save and then return to me via email/return to sender.

Your responses have been very valuable to me and my research and I would like to thank you again for being so kind as to have taken the time to complete. I have also attached a copy of the original survey. Please feel free to contact me for any questions you may have. I plan to defend my thesis this April 2011.

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III. Questionnaire

Main Obstacle of Women in Interfaith Dialogue **SURVEY -Women only, please.**

1. What is your faith?

2. How old are you? ___20-30 yrs ___31-40 yrs ___41-50 yrs ___51-60 yrs

   ___60 yrs +

3. In what region of the US do you live (Mid-West, East, West, and Southwest etc)?

4. How long have you participated in interfaith dialogues (explain, if necessary)?

5. With what faith(s) have you participated in interfaith dialogue?

6. In your opinion, what has been your greatest obstacle in participating in interfaith dialogue?

7. Your second greatest obstacle?

8. In your opinion, what has been the greatest obstacle for Muslim women to participate in interfaith dialogue? (If you are Muslim, this answer may differ from your own personal obstacles, and you may list more than one)

9. Comments regarding the obstacles women face in participating in interfaith dialogues (optional):

Thank you for your time, effort and consideration. When survey is complete, please submit to:

kdanielsontawil@yahoo.com

Sincerely Wa salam,
Karen Danielson
Candidate for the Master's Degree
In Islamic Studies
University of Jordan

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IV. Agreement Statement

The Main Obstacles of Women in Interfaith Dialogue Survey

Karen Pearl Danielson, University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan
Master's Candidate in Islamic Studies: An Evaluation of American Muslim Da'wa Effort: The Role and Obstacles of American Muslim Women in Interfaith Dialogue

Instructions:
Please read the following statements carefully and mark your preferences where indicated. Returning this form as an attachment to the researcher/sender indicates your agreement with all statements and your voluntary participation in the study. Returning this form while failing to mark a preference where indicated will be interpreted as an affirmative preference. Please ask the researcher if you have any questions regarding this consent form.

**I am aware that this survey is conducted by an independent graduate student/researcher with the goal of producing a descriptive case study from interfaith participants.*

**I am aware that the information I provide is for research purposes only. I understand that my responses will be confidential and that my name will not be associated with any results of this study.*

**I am aware that I have the right to full anonymity upon request, and that upon request the researcher will omit all identifying information from both notes and drafts.*

**I am aware that I have the right to refuse to answer any question and to terminate my participation at any time, and that the researcher will answer any questions I have about the study.*

**I am aware of and take full responsibility for any risk, physical, psychological, legal, or social, associated with participation in this study.*

**I am aware that I will not receive monetary compensation for participation in this study, but a copy of the final study will be made available to me upon request.*

**I [do/do not] give the researcher permission to use my name and position in the final study.*

**I [do/do not] give the researcher permission to use my organizational affiliation in the final study.*

**I [do/do not] give the researcher permission to use data collected in this survey in a later study.*

*Date:*______________________________
*Name:*_____________________________

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Thank you for participating! *Questions, comments, complaints, and requests for the final written study can be directed to: Dr. M. Majali, University of Jordan, Faculty of Higher Education Director Telephone (962)06-535-5000 Or Karen Pearl Danielson, Master's Candidate at* kdanielsontawil@yahoo.com

V. Respondents –1 - 14

The Main Obstacles of Women in Interfaith Dialogue –SURVEY May 2009

Respondents 1-14

Respondent #1

1. **What is your faith?**
   Presbyterian-Christian
2. **How old are you?**
   No response available
3. **What region of the US?**
   Midwest
4. **How long have you participated in Interfaith Dialogue (I.D.)?**
   8years
5. **What faiths have you participated in I.D.?**
   Sunni-Islam
6. **What is your biggest obstacle in participating in I.D.?**
   We are a group of fairly liberal Presbyterians, both men and women, in dialogue with predominantly conservative Muslim men. Very few Muslim women attend. These Muslim men are focused on teaching us about Islam, but they don't seem to care much about learning about Presbyterian, or even Protestant, theology or history. After all this time, they still equate Christians with Catholics.
7. **What is your 2nd biggest obstacle?**
   When we began in 2001, participants were Muslims from countries all over the world except for Indonesia. The conversations were stilted and they didn't seem to want to express themselves freely. Now only Muslims from India attend with an occasional Pakistani. This group is more verbal, but the message seems to be rigid and frozen into what they have been taught. I don't hear the open exploring that we Presbyterians engage in.
8. **In your opinion what is the biggest obstacle Muslim women face when participating in I.D.?**
   Muslim women who have come to our dialogues generally sit quietly beside their husbands and don't speak unless given permission by their husbands or are called upon by their husbands. In one case, one of these wives upon being called on gave what seemed to be a very scripted message. I have met some of same these women outside the dialogues and they are vibrant, expressive, and full of personality and humor. What is it about these Muslim husband/wife relationships?
   Women who have converted to Islam from some other faith don't seem to be as inhibited as those women who were born into the faith, yet when the converts have come and expressed themselves openly, the conservative men, not their husbands, seem somewhat uncomfortable.
   -I participated in a Muslim/Protestant dialogue a couple of years ago with just women in attendance. What a difference! The women were outspoken, feisty in their relationships with each other, and seemed completely open with the Protestants. There was a mix of young and older women, with many in their 20s and 30s. Many had been born in the United States, but also many had not. It was a great event, and we were all sorry to see it come to a close.
9. **Any comments regarding the obstacles women face when participating in I.D.**
   Personally, I feel that there is something wrong with Muslim men. I understand that this is a somewhat radical statement, but you asked, and this is what I believe. Here are some of my observations:
   --Once, many years ago, I gazed at a beautiful beach on the Mediterranean Sea out of my window in a high-rise hotel in Algiers. The beach was filled with men enjoying the sun and water. Just men. Not a woman was to be seen.
   --This whole burkha/hijab thing. If a woman truly feels that this is an expression of her faith and she chooses to wear one or the other of these, I understand, and applaud her decision. Outward expressions of inward faith are to be respected. When the wearing of this clothing is dictated by men, or politicians and is imposed on an entire society, I find that extremely offensive. Then it can be seen as a way for men to keep "their" women in their place, and further seems to be a way for men to keep their own sexual desires in check. Muslim men seem so afraid of their own biological urges and so afraid that they won't be able to control themselves. It's almost like a cultural disease that has taken hold of them. They seem to be in perpetual adolescence and fearful of growing up.
   --There appears to be a huge divide between Muslim men and Muslim women. They seem to live in

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separate cultures even as they live together and side by side in families and neighborhoods.
--I think that Muslim women all over the world need to come to terms with their men, and to become more prominent in public roles in such a way that men begin to see that they are just as capable as the men are. But that may be the problem. Women are just as capable, just as smart, and this seems to terrify Muslim men who then in turn must work to keep them hidden.

Respondent #2

1. **What is your faith?**
   Islam
2. **How old are you?**
   41-50 years old
3. **What region of the US?**
   Midwest
4. **How long have you participated in Interfaith Dialogue (I.D.)?**
   6 years
5. **What faiths have you participated in I.D.?**
   Catholics
6. **What is your biggest obstacle in participating in I.D.?**
   Commitment and enthusiasm
7. **What is your 2nd biggest obstacle?**
   Lack of youth representation
8. **In your opinion what is the biggest obstacle Muslim women face when participating in I.D.?**
   Their lack of confidence to approach the issues, and demanding life style.
9. **Any comments regarding the obstacles women face when participating in I.D.**
   No Comment

Respondent #3

1. **What is your faith?**
   Islam
2. **How old are you?**
   31-40 years old
3. **What region of the US?**
   Midwest
4. **How long have you participated in Interfaith Dialogue (I.D.)?**
   6 years
5. **What faiths have you participated in I.D.?**
   Catholics
6. **What is your biggest obstacle in participating in I.D.?**
   The greatest obstacle is relating to the other side because of large age difference
7. **What is your 2nd biggest obstacle?**
   The second obstacle is not meeting consistently
8. **In your opinion what is the biggest obstacle Muslim women face when participating in I.D.?**
   The community is not very encouraging…..they think "what are you getting out of this?"
9. **Any comments regarding the obstacles women face when participating in I.D.**
   No Comment

Respondent #4

1. **What is your faith?**
   Catholic
2. **How old are you?**
   51-40 years old
3. **What region of the US?**
   Midwest
4. **How long have you participated in Interfaith Dialogue (I.D.)?**
   10 years
5. **What faiths have you participated in I.D.?**
   Sunni-Islam
6. **What is your biggest obstacle in participating in I.D.?**
   Preconceived notions about faith
7. **What is your 2nd biggest obstacle?**

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Time constraints (busy schedules)

8. **In your opinion what is the biggest obstacle Muslim women face when participating in I.D.?**
   No comment
9. **Any comments regarding the obstacles women face when participating in I.D.**
   Sometimes, when we feel strongly about an idea, it becomes emotional trying to express our feelings, especially when they are different from the other members in the group. The beauty of our group is that the women who make up our group seem to genuinely care about the members and therefore are more sensitive an individual's needs. But this has developed over time. Bringing in new members has always been difficult but manageable.

Respondent #5

1. **What is your faith?**
   Islam
2. **How old are you?**
   No comment
3. **What region of the US?**
   Midwest
4. **How long have you participated in Interfaith Dialogue (I.D.)?**
   3 years
5. **What faiths have you participated in I.D.?**
   Catholics, Christians, Jews and Methodists
6. **What is your biggest obstacle in participating in I.D.?**
   There is never enough or different faces from the other groups to discuss and share with
7. **What is your 2nd biggest obstacle?**
   I am dealing with an older generation from the opposite side. Our side, you would have the at least three generations in the group.
8. **In your opinion what is the biggest obstacle Muslim women face when participating in I.D.?**
   That we are not getting to the others in the other faiths churches or sections, we are limited.
   - getting Youth involved (we are working on it now)
   - doing things out in the public, such as both sides going to colleges , churches, schools together and educating the public about our similarities more than differences.
9. **Any comments regarding the obstacles women face when participating in I.D.**
   Honestly, there aren't any, at least to me.

Respondent #6

1. **What is your faith?**
   Islam
2. **How old are you?**
   31-40 years
3. **What region of the US?**
   Midwest
4. **How long have you participated in Interfaith Dialogue (I.D.)?**
   11 years
5. **What faiths have you participated in I.D.?**
   Catholics
6. **What is your biggest obstacle in participating in I.D.?**
   At the beginning, I was very weary about making a statement that could be perceived as offensive to the other faith members.
7. **What is your 2nd biggest obstacle?**
   My second greatest obstacle was about making sure that I found the proper ways of conveying Islam to them without sounding preachy.
8. **In your opinion what is the biggest obstacle Muslim women face when participating in I.D.?**
   I have never really felt any challenge, but I could see how for some, the language barrier could have prevented them from participating in dialoguing.
9. **Any comments regarding the obstacles women face when participating in I.D.**
   our group is doing well. We are also planning to expand to a youth group (*[name of 21-30year old woman]* accepted to take that), a man's group and other denominations. We also want to increase our service work.

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Respondent #7

1. **What is your faith?**
   Jewish. I also study Buddhism, and have studied many of the Christian religions, as well as read the Qur'an
2. **How old are you?**
   61+ years
3. **What region of the US?**
   Midwest
4. **How long have you participated in Interfaith Dialogue (I.D.)?**
   8 years
5. **What faiths have you participated in I.D.?**
   Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism and Islam
6. **What is your biggest obstacle in participating in I.D.?**
   The greatest obstacle I have faced in working in interfaith dialogue is lack of trust by every religious group, and a desire to protect their own interests above the interests of the larger interfaith community.
7. **What is your 2nd biggest obstacle?**
   Lack of follow through after the initial dialogue.
8. **In your opinion what is the biggest obstacle Muslim women face when participating in I.D.?**
   Greatest obstacle that I observe as an outsider is that Muslim women are not recognized as imams, and therefore lack a certain religious authority when interacting with recognized female rabbis, ministers, etc
9. **Any comments regarding the obstacles women face when participating in I.D.**
   Time, ability to stay with the process for a long period,[Muslim women] lack of confidence in their own abilities

Respondent #8

1. **What is your faith?**
   Islam
2. **How old are you?**
   51-60 years
3. **What region of the US?**
   Midwest
4. **How long have you participated in Interfaith Dialogue (I.D.)?**
   30 years
5. **What faiths have you participated in I.D.?**
   Christians, Catholics, Jews, Hindus, Janes and Wiccans
6. **What is your biggest obstacle in participating in I.D.?**
   The greatest challenge is when someone insists that you are incorrect and does not allow you to hold your own perspective or fact about your faith. The most brutal memory i have is a woman who insists Allah is not God (the God she knows) She was angry every time I made a point. She was discourteous as well. I was explaining in the end that it is like saying abuela for grandmother or dadi or sitti. We all think of a woman who is the mother of a child's parent and it does not matter who uses these names, they symbolize that woman for whomever it is that is being identified. Allah similarly means God in another language. She reminded me that then statues could be Gods. She was a controlling and unhappy person. I had to resign to almost saying anything that I had planned to discuss because we could not agree on the baseline.
7. **What is your 2nd biggest obstacle?**
   Usually these are one- time events. I think this is an obstacle because you are always on the surface and not really in depth. It seems that in this case --we merely give the same things over and over again with a few new faces. I believe that
   we need groups and i know a couple that keep on discussing and the conversation is much richer.
8. **In your opinion what is the biggest obstacle Muslim women face when participating in I.D.?**
   There are never enough women to do the dialogues. Frequently they are too shy and the experience is negative. Women not typically having a solid background (including me) so the discussion is often with an imam.
9. **Any comments regarding the obstacles women face when participating in I.D.**
   Having been from a different I faith that the weakness is in the base knowledge that both groups of women have. I believe that there needs to be a long range planning toward education. If we do this i believe that we would see results.

Respondent #9

1. **What is your faith?**
   Presbyterian/Christian

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2. **How old are you?**
   No comment
3. **What region of the US?**
   Midwest
4. **How long have you participated in Interfaith Dialogue (I.D.)?**
   Several years
5. **What faiths have you participated in I.D.?**
   Muslims, plus one elderly Jewish woman joined our church bible study group.
6. **What is your biggest obstacle in participating in I.D.?**
   Discomfort that Muslims dialogues are attended mainly by Muslim men, rarely women
7. **What is your 2nd biggest obstacle?**
   Not wanting to speak openly about my unorthodox Enlightenment-type Christian beliefs.
8. **In your opinion what is the biggest obstacle Muslim women face when participating in I.D.?**
   In the presence of Muslim men, the Muslim women rarely ever spoke (and eventually stopped attending altogether). Only once when we separated into male and female groups did they talk, quite freely. It was wonderful! I then proposed, and we had a Presbyterian-Muslim Women's all day retreat, which was satisfying and successful. The next year another Christian protestant church in the Chicago area also sponsored a Christian-Muslim women's retreat.
9. **Any comments regarding the obstacles women face when participating in I.D.**
   When I asked the Muslim men, with no Muslim women in attendance, why the women did not speak when in a group with the men, I was told, tradition. I asked if it were part of the religion. They said yes maybe.

Respondent #10

1. **What is your faith?**
   Christian, formal member of the Catholic Church (Sister of Sion)
2. **How old are you?**
   60+ years
3. **What region of the US?**
   Midwest
4. **How long have you participated in Interfaith Dialogue (I.D.)?**
   20 years
5. **What faiths have you participated in I.D.?**
   Both the Jewish and Muslim communities in both bilateral and trilateral situations; some in multilateral situations with other religious communities e.g. Hindu's, etc. Also participate in many "ecumenical" dialogues with other Christians.
6. **What is your biggest obstacle in participating in I.D.?**
   No comment
7. **What is your 2nd biggest obstacle?**
   No comment
8. **In your opinion what is the biggest obstacle Muslim women face when participating in I.D.?**
   The women interested are young women so there are some tensions with children and husbands in terms of availability and commitment to a series of encounters. One-time events are more possible – and these usually open a desire for more. Sometimes "politics" can present obstacles; most often these are overcome if there are relationships of trust already established.
9. **Any comments regarding the obstacles women face when participating in I.D.**
   I don't think that I have personally experienced obstacles to my participation and I have had great access to opportunities to participate that many in my community have not had. As more and more Catholics become open to these kinds of experiences, it is sometimes difficult to provide them with opportunities for dialogue. There is always some "nervousness" about not knowing enough about one's own tradition. I have learned too, that there is often a need to "debrief" our experiences in privacy in our own community in order to reflect more deeply on our learning; and this does not happen enough. Also we don't have as many "leaders" as we need – women with experience to facilitate our learning together. I don't necessarily see that as a bad thing – just a step along the way and an affirmation of where we need to develop. I find that women are naturally interested in learning about each other.

Respondent #11

1. **What is your faith?**
   Catholic
2. **How old are you?**
   51-60 years
3. **What region of the US?**

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Midwest

4. **How long have you participated in Interfaith Dialogue (I.D.)?**
   11 years
5. **What faiths have you participated in I.D.?**
   Catholic, Muslims, Jews
6. **What is your biggest obstacle in participating in I.D.?**
   None that I can think of. My only problem is when topics are assigned to both sides and then later reported on. Dialogue should be "exchanging ideas" not reporting.
7. **What is your 2nd biggest obstacle?**
   At times having the feeling that someone is trying to convert me to their side.
   Understanding that culture, race, and sex have a major role of what faith we represent.
8. **In your opinion what is the biggest obstacle Muslim women face when participating in I.D.?**
   Cultural language, afraid of going outside of their perimeters.
   Not feeling relaxed enough with another faith
9. **Any comments regarding the obstacles women face when participating in I.D.**
   Even if we have obstacles, we need to respect each other because we are all created by the same God for the same purpose. It is how we get to that purpose that must be respected. He loves all of us equally.

Respondent #12

1. **What is your faith?**
   Catholic
2. **How old are you?**
   60+ years
3. **What region of the US?**
   Midwest
4. **How long have you participated in Interfaith Dialogue (I.D.)?**
   4 years
5. **What faiths have you participated in I.D.?**
   Catholic/Muslims
6. **What is your biggest obstacle in participating in I.D.?**
   Greatest obstacle is reconciling faith issues and cultural practices of Muslims, specifically the recent torture/murder of a 2-year old girl and the subsequent outrage of the Muslim community (in the press as well as in the dialogue group) over the published photo of the Muslim aunt without her head scarf instead of sorrow over the death of a child
7. **What is your 2nd biggest obstacle?**
   Second greatest is fear of offending
8. **In your opinion what is the biggest obstacle Muslim women face when participating in I.D.?**
   Obstacle for Muslim women in participating: Not enough curiosity about Catholics and Jews
9. **Any comments regarding the obstacles women face when participating in I.D.**
   No Comment

Respondent #13

1. **What is your faith?**
   Catholic
2. **How old are you?**
   60+ years
3. **What region of the US?**
   Midwest
4. **How long have you participated in Interfaith Dialogue (I.D.)?**
   3 years
5. **What faiths have you participated in I.D.?**
   Catholic/Muslims
6. **What is your biggest obstacle in participating in I.D.?**
   The greatest obstacle in participating in interfaith dialogue was getting past the expressions of belief systems that could be misunderstood because of cultural differences.
7. **What is your 2nd biggest obstacle?**
   Another obstacle: Moving to a deeper level, past the knowledge of the religion to a place that shares how that faith gives shape to our lives.
8. **In your opinion what is the biggest obstacle Muslim women face when participating in I.D.?**
   An obstacle for Muslim women could be in trying to justify the ideals in Quran with their lived experiences in various cultures. And, for some, distinguishing Catholic from Christian differences on a faith or ritual level.

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9. **Any comments regarding the obstacles women face when participating in I.D.**
   Comments regarding obstacles: Fashioning a clear reason/objective for the dialogue that would lay a foundation for building an atmosphere and reality of trust. Acknowledging preconceived jugments, yet being willing to trust the others' good will. Moving beyond knowing "about" the other's system, to knowing the other as a child of God, a believer who moves in life grounded by her relationship with that God. Obstacles break down when sharing around a festive table.

Respondent #14

1. **What is your faith?**
   Judaism
2. **How old are you?**
   60+ years
3. **What region of the US?**
   Midwest
4. **How long have you participated in Interfaith Dialogue (I.D.)?**
   26 years
5. **What faiths have you participated in I.D.?**
   Roman Catholic, Islam and I have been in dialogue with Polish Catholics, Methodists, Presbyterians and others.
6. **What is your biggest obstacle in participating in I.D.?**
   The biggest obstacle is encouraging people to come to the table for the first time. After that, it is not too difficult to get people to talk about themselves and to talk with others, slowly learning about one another, losing the fear and anxiety about one another, and building up understanding and respect and trust for the "other." This is relationship building at its best.
7. **What is your 2nd biggest obstacle?**
   It is difficult to find enough people who will use their own contacts and experiences in dialogue to encourage others to come to the table.
8. **In your opinion what is the biggest obstacle Muslim women face when participating in I.D.?**
   In my experience, Muslim women in a mixed gender group are reticent to participate fully and openly in a conversation. In my mixed group, I encouraged the men to bring their daughters along because I wondered if the reticence was generational or cultural. After some shyness, the younger women seemed comfortable expressing their opinions even in the company of men they did not know. This had nothing to do with head coverings. In the women's groups, women spoke out loud and clear. In fact, women are much better at dialogue than men, because men tend to wear their institutional hats even at a dialogue table. They seem to be concerned about how they might be perceived. In my most recent work, I have found that the older Muslim women, who start out sitting together with male and female colleagues, sort of migrate to sit with other women as a room fills up with attendees. Moreover, I have noticed a very articulate Muslim woman who becomes silent when her husband is around in a public setting. Maybe the word is deferential.
9. **Any comments regarding the obstacles women face when participating in I.D.**
   * Since 1983. Through the American Jewish Committee, a patron of interreligious relations, I became active in Catholic-Jewish relations in Chicago and helped develop parish/synagogue lay living room dialogues, starting 1983-85, when Catholics and Jews celebrated Nostra Aetate from Vatican II. These groups were active for more than 10 years. In 1988, I started a Catholic-Jewish Women's group which expanded as a trilateral group with Muslim women starting in 1993. In 1992, I was invited to participate in the start up of a Muslim Jewish dialogue, initiated by the Archdiocese of Chicago, a dialogue that failed because there were far too many people with too many diverse agendas at the table. In 1993, I was asked by several Muslim leaders. Who had been at the 1992 dialogue attempt, to try to put together a Muslim-Jewish dialogue that could function. We did do that and it lasted until 2000, when poor judgment on both sides (my opinion) prevented further meetings. Somewhere in-between, during the summer of 1994, I participated in an interreligious trip to Israel with one rabbi, many Protestant ministers, several Greek and Catholic priests and women religious. In 2002, in response to the many questions and concerns about the effects and quality of religious school textbooks and teaching, I founded and currently chair the Chicago Coalition of Interreligious Learning, a group of Catholic Christian, Jewish and Muslim religious school educators, writers and textbook publishers. We work together and present workshops to religious educators at education conferences, local and national, which meet in Chicago. Recently, we have been invited to present at two public High Schools and this represents an important step for us. As part of our work together, we read, studied and critiqued one another's religious school textbooks and requested and achieved the elimination of stereotypes, contempt and hatred for "other" religions.

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Appendix Y

500 Most Influential Muslims -2009

http://www.examiner.com/islamic-in-detroit/500-most-influential-muslims-women

retrieved 5/21/2010

Posted November 29, 2009

By Heather Laird

The Prince Alwaleed Bin Talaal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding and The Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre published its first edition in what promises to be an annual series of insight into the movers and shakers of the Muslim world. Entitled, The 500 Most Influential Muslims 2009, the book categorizes Muslims' influential capacities into 15 categories: scholarly, political, administrative, lineage, preachers, women, youth, philanthropy, development, science and technology, arts and culture, Qu'ran reciters, media, radicals, international Islamic networks and issues of the day. As part of an ongoing series each week those receiving mention in North America will be highlighted.

This week was supposed to highlight those Americans known for their "Lineage". There are no Americans in this category. The following category is "Preachers." Again there were no Americans in this category, however, there was one notable person from Canada who most people in America are familiar with and it is worth noting: Dr. Jamal Badawi.

This week will highlight women in America who were recognized as having influence.

Aminah Assilmi[1] converted to Islam. She spearheaded and is the president of the International Union of Muslim Women. She was responsible for organizing the lobbying effort which provided the community with the 'Eid stamps.

Dr. Merve Kavackci was barred from the Turkish Parliament in 1999 for refusing to remove her head-covering; hijab. She is a lecturer at George Washington University.

Dr. Ingrid Mattson in 2001 was elected vice-president of ISNA and then in 2006 elected president of ISNA. ISNA is the largest Muslim organization in North America. She was the first woman to ever be elected to this high of a position in the organization. Canadian born, she is the Director of the Islamic Chaplaincy Program and professor of the Hartford Seminary.

Dalia Mogahed is the senior analyst and executive director for the Gallup Center for Muslim Studies. She was appointed by President Obama to serve on the Advisory Council for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships.

Robina Niaz is the executive director of Turning Point for Women and Families. She was recognized by CNN for her efforts.



Dr. Ingrid Mattson at National Cathedral/Courtesy of Flickr.com



Dalia Mogahed with Speaker Pelosi, Courtesy of Flickr.com

[11] Allah yarhamha. Aminah Assilmi recently died in a fatal car crash March 2006. She will be missed.

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APPENDIX Z

For immediate release



Sen. Durbin and his staff during his visit to the Council office.

231 S. State Street, Suite 300, Chicago, IL 60604, Phone: 312-506-0070, Fax: 312-506-0077, info@ciogc.org, www.ciogc.org

CIOGC thanks Sen. Durbin for announcing hearings

on American Muslim civil rights

(CHICAGO - March 24, 2011) – The Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago salutes Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) for announcing that on March 29, 2011, he will be holding the first Congressional hearings to ever deal with the civil rights and liberties of American Muslims.

"This is great news from our U.S. Senator and is a much needed response to Rep. Peter King's hearings," said Dr. Zaher Sahloul, chairperson of the Council. "In a meeting at the Mosque Foundation in Bridgeview just a few weeks ago, Senator Durbin had promised that he would give the Muslim community a fair hearing and he has kept his word. We are proud that he represents our great state of Illinois in the U.S. Senate."

Sen. Durbin is also the Assistant Senate Majority Leader and the Chairman of the Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Human Rights. This Subcommittee has jurisdiction over laws and policies dealing with civil liberties and civil rights.

"Our Constitution protects the free exercise of religion for all Americans," Sen. Durbin said in a statement. "During the course of our history, many religions have faced intolerance. It is important for our generation to renew our founding charter's commitment to religious diversity and to protect the liberties guaranteed by our Bill of Rights."

"In a time where anti-Muslim rhetoric is at an all-time high, Sen. Durbin's hearings are a breath of fresh air," said Kiran Ansari, communications director at the Council. "It is crucial that Muslims call the Senator's office to thank him for making such a brave and fair move."

The witnesses for the March 29 hearing will include Farhana Khera from Muslim Advocates. The hearing is scheduled to be held at 10AM (EST) in Room 226 of the Dirksen Senate Office Building in Washington, D.C.

Call Senator Durbin's office today to thank him for holding this hearing:
WASHINGTON, D.C. office: Phone: (202) 224-2152 and Fax: (202) 228-0400
CHICAGO office: Phone: (312) 353-4952 and Fax: (312) 353-0150
Email him using this form

Media inquiries: Kiran Ansari, crescent@ciogc.org 630-544-9377

The Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago is a federation of 53 mosques, schools and social service organizations in the metropolitan Chicago region that collectively represent over 400,000 Muslims. The Council works to coordinate the activities of the Muslim community as well as provide education, training, networking and advocacy to and on behalf of our member organizations.

The Council is a federation of 53 Muslim organizations serving 400,000 Muslims in the Greater Chicago.

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All Praise is Due to Allah!

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تقييم الجهود الدعوية للمسلمين الأمريكان: دور وعقبات المرأة المسلمة الأمريكية في مجال الحوار بين الأديان

إعداد

كارن بيرل دانيلسون

إشراف

أ. **د. محمد خازر المجالي**

ملخص

يعطي هذا البحث تقييما وقياسا لتطبيقات الاسلامفوبيا ومدى انتشارها في أمريكا، واثر ذلك على السياسة والمجتمع الامريكيين، وكيف أنها تدفع أو تجبر مسلمي أمريكا على الاستجابة إلى ذلك. هذا إضافة إلى أن البحث يقيس مدى صلابة وتماسك القدرة الاجتماعية والمؤسسية لمجتمع مسلمي أمريكا التي قد لا تدفع بشكل كاف تأثيرات الاسلامفوبيا والصور النمطية التي ترسمها عن المسلمين في المجتمع الأمريكي. هذا الاختبار تاريخي تطوري، وبالتحديد فإن البحث الحالي يجلي مفهوم الدعوة على الصعيد النفسي عند المسلمين الأمريكيين، ويبين أثره على حوار الأديان مؤكدا على أن دور المرأة المسلمة الأمريكية في أمريكا يجب أن يتطور وينمو ويصبح قياديا وأكثر سلطة من قبل، وهذا بدوره يساعد في تعميق التحام مسلمي أمريكا مع نسيج المجتمع الأمريكي. وركز البحث كذلك على بيان أن للمرأة الأمريكية الداعية أثرا ايجابيا في بيان الصورة الحقيقية أن الإسلام السمح ضد العنف و ضد اضطهاد المرأة.

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